

# WARRIORS

SKYCLAN AND  
THE STRANGER



NOW IN  
FULL  
COLOR!

INCLUDES:  
THE RESCUE • BEYOND THE CODE  
AFTER THE FLOOD

ERIN HUNTER

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR



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# WARRIORS

SKYCLAN &  
THE STRANGER

CREATED BY  
ERIN HUNTER

WRITTEN BY  
DAN JOLLEY

ART BY  
JAMES L. BARRY



HAMBURG // LONDON // LOS ANGELES // TOKYO

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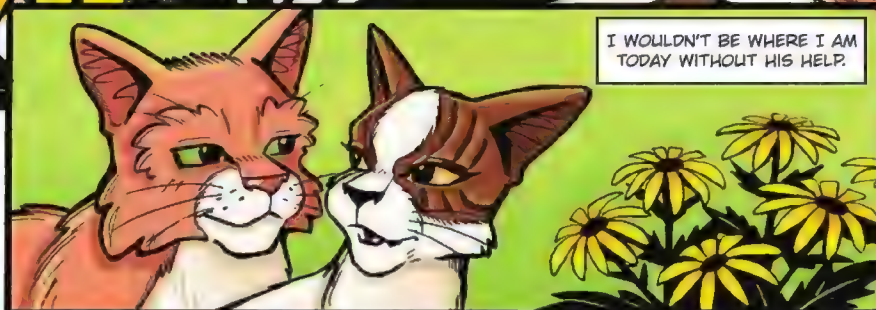


# WARRIORS

THE RESCUE













BELOW US IS  
SKYCLAN'S CAMP.



IT'S A SAFE PLACE.  
A SECURE PLACE.

A PLACE OF PEACE.





NOW--ARE YOU  
PAYING ATTENTION?

YES,  
RABBITLEAP!

OKAY, YOU GATHER  
YOUR LEGS UNDER  
YOU AND SPRING  
STRAIGHT UP.



RIDICULOUS. BOUNCING  
ABOUT ALL OVER  
THE PLACE.

WE'RE CATS,  
NOT RABBITS.



YOU'LL BE AMAZED  
AT HOW HIGH YOU CAN GO  
IF YOU PRACTICE.



THE ELDER CAT, LICHENFUR,  
SELDOM HAS PLEASANT WORDS FOR  
ANY CAT, BUT SHE MEANS NO HARM.

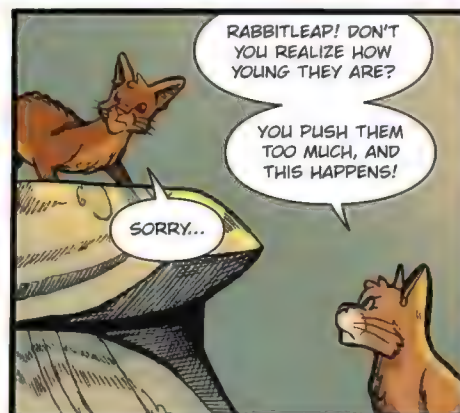
WHAT DOES HE PLAN  
TO DO, LAND ON PREY AND  
SQUASH IT TO DEATH?





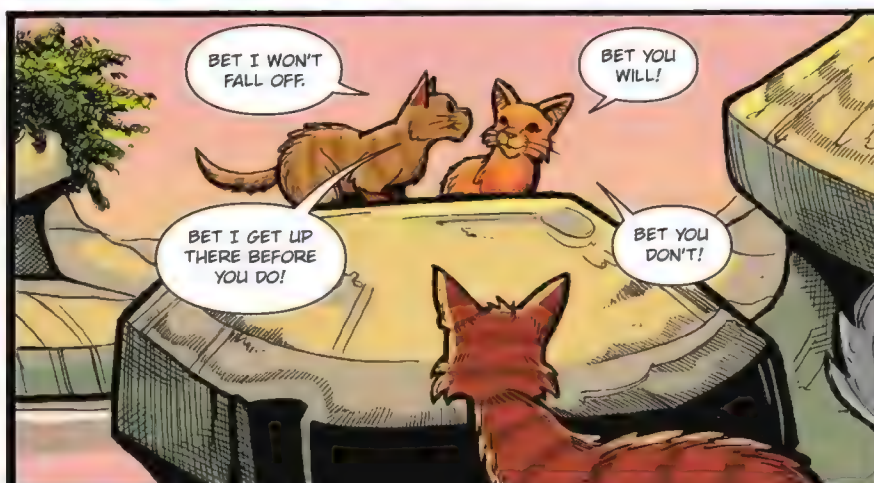






































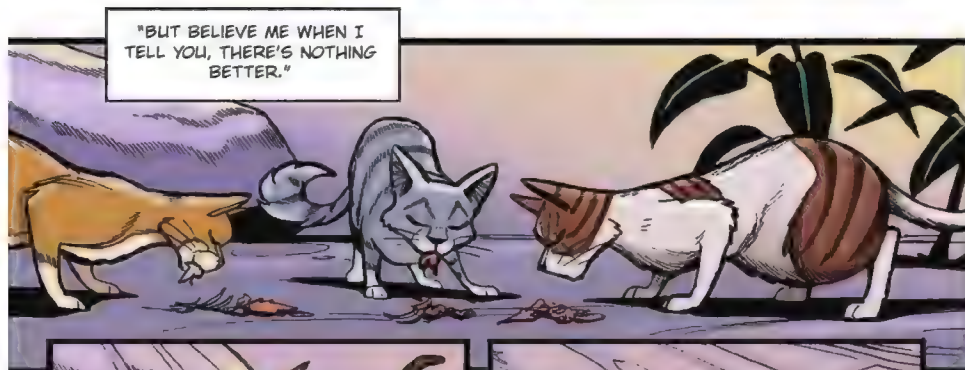














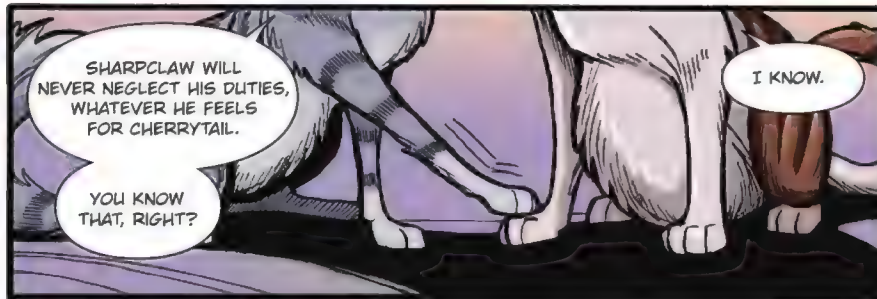




























...CHERRYTAIL AND I CHECKED THE FOX-SCENT. IT WAS NO FARTHER THAN THE BRANCHES MARKED BY EBONYCLAW'S PATROL.

I SENT ANOTHER BORDER PATROL THERE TODAY.

LED BY WHOM?

WASPPHISKER. HE TOOK TINYCLOUD, SANDYPAW, AND NETTLESPASH WITH HIM.

I KNOW YOU SAY YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, BUT YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO TURN DOWN A PATROL BEFORE.

SHOULD I STAY HERE WITH YOU TODAY?

DON'T BE SILLY. I'M JUST TIRED AND A BIT ACHY. AND IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN...

...YOU HAVE A PATROL TO CATCH UP WITH.



AM I BEING UNREALISTIC? UNREASONABLE? I'M NOT SURE.



BUT IT DOES FEEL GOOD TO LET THE SUN WARM MY PELT.



UNTIL I GROW BORED AND RESTLESS, THAT IS.











I'D SAY THIS WAS FAR ENOUGH, WOULDN'T YOU?

I AM A BIT WINDED. WE CAN--



NEITHER OF US SPEAKS, BUT WE BOTH HEAR THE RUSTLING IN THE WOODS NEARBY. INTRUDERS?



WASPWHISKER! IS SOMETHING WRONG?

WE'VE LOST SANDYPAW AND NETTLESPASH! THE PATROL SPLIT UP TO FOLLOW THE OLD FOX-SCENT OVER THE BORDER...

...LOOKING FOR ANY DENS, BUT NOW THE OTHER TWO HAVE VANISHED.



NETTLESPASH AND SANDYPAW ARE YOUNG CATS. THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE STRAYED OUTSIDE THE CLAN BORDERS!

I SHOULDN'T HAVE DIVIDED THE PATROL. THIS IS MY FAULT.



THAT DOESN'T MATTER, WASPWHISKER.

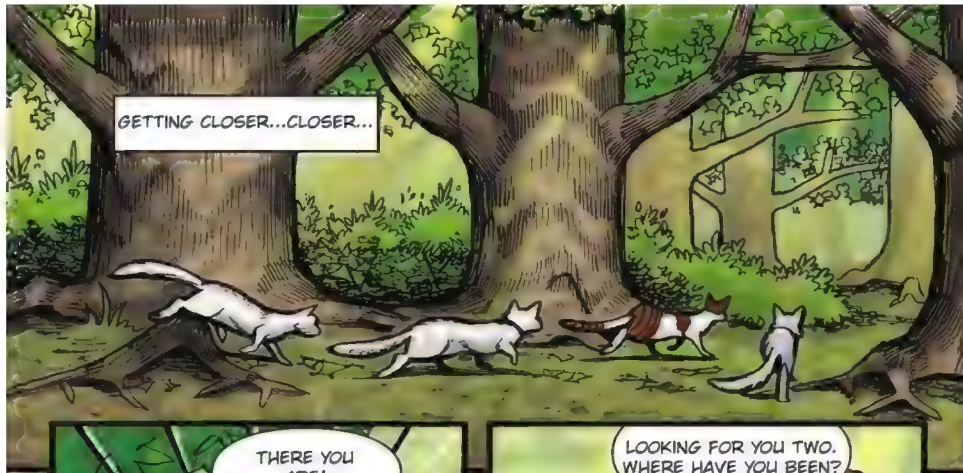
WHAT MATTERS IS FINDING THEM.





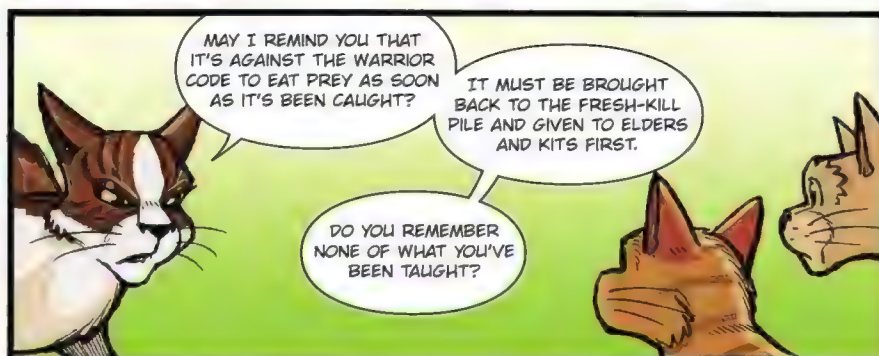






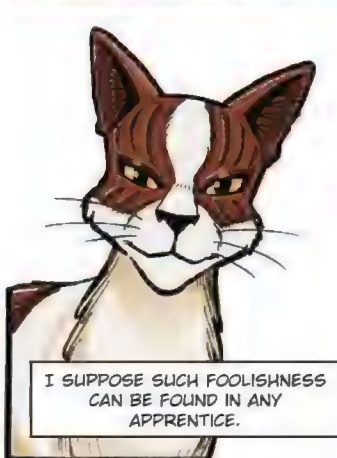
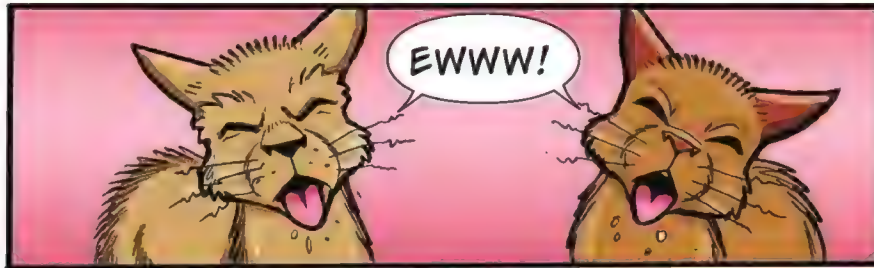




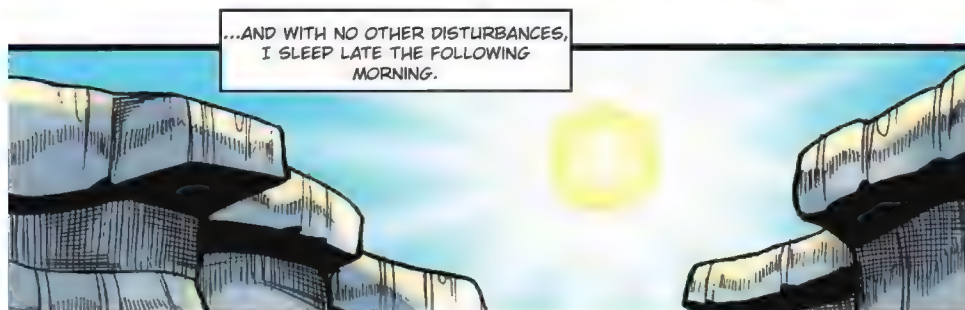




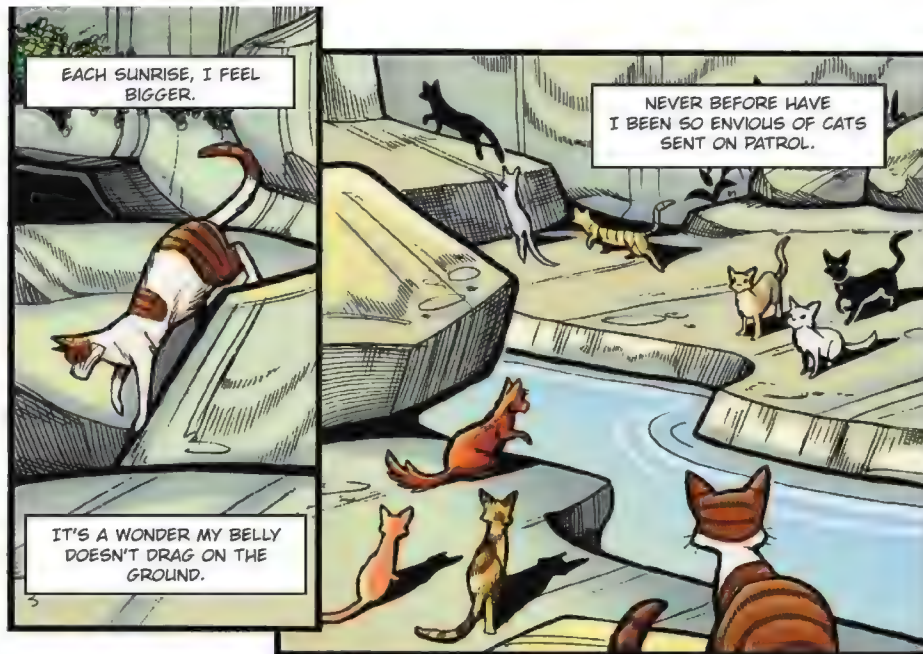






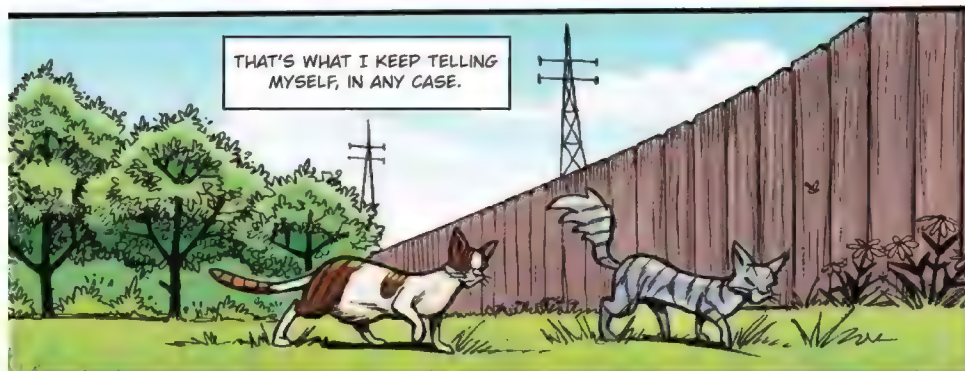
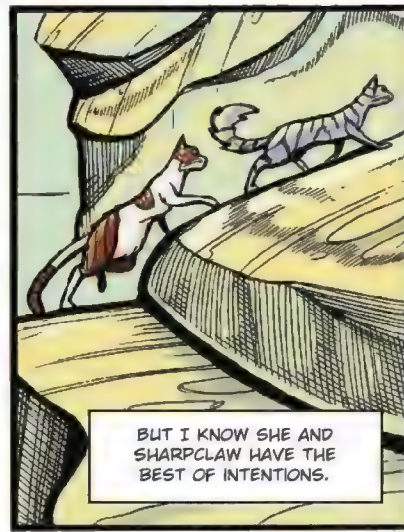
















YOU KNOW, LEAFSTAR, YOU SHOULDN'T ARGUE WITH SHARPCLAW. HE ONLY HAS YOUR BEST INTERESTS AT HEART.

I KNOW, I KNOW. BUT I HAVE THE CLAN'S BEST INTERESTS AT HEART, ECHOSONG.

I...



...I FEAR...DEEP DOWN INSIDE... THAT I'M SOMEHOW BETRAYING SKYCLAN BY HAVING KITS.

FIRESTAR DIDN'T TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT THIS!



PROBABLY BECAUSE HE'S A TOM. IT WOULDN'T BE AN ISSUE FOR HIM.

IT'S NOT RIGHT THAT SHE-CAT LEADERS SHOULD HAVE ALL THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEADING A CLAN...

...AND ALL THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF RAISING KITS!

BUT...RIGHT OR NOT...I'M GOING TO DO IT. I'M GOING TO DO BOTH JOBS. I'M GOING TO DO THEM WELL.

AND I'D LIKE TO SEE A TOM TRY TO KEEP UP WITH ME!

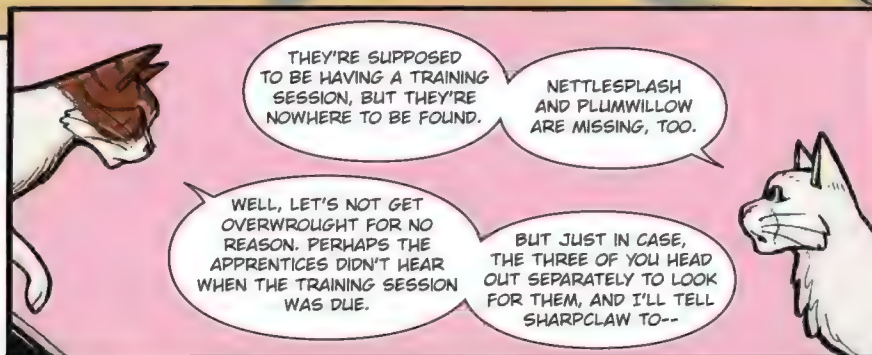




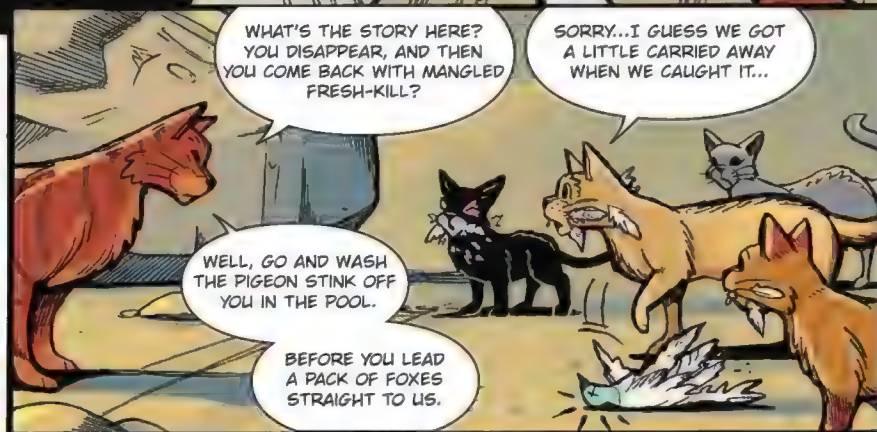
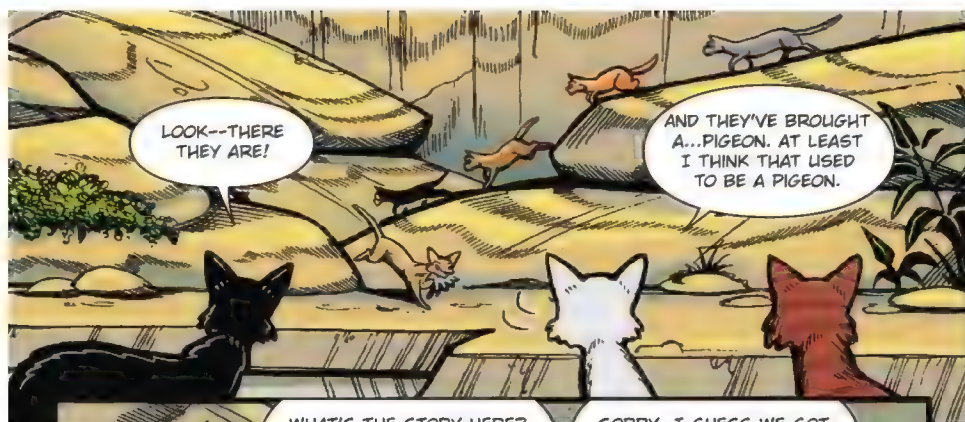
















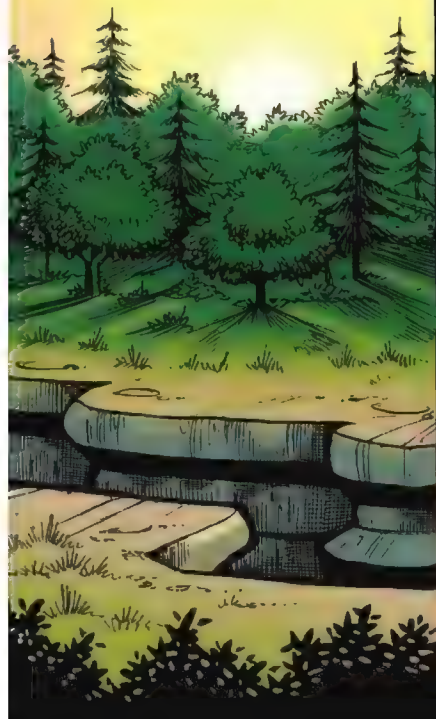




THINGS SEEM TO BE  
QUIET FOR A FEW DAYS.

PATROLS  
COME AND GO...

THE SUN KEEPS  
GETTING HOTTER...

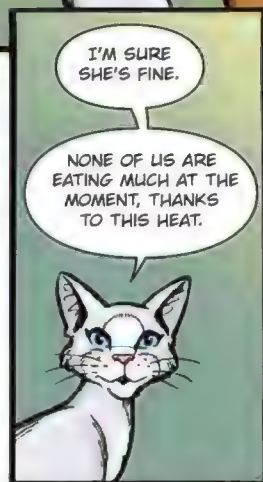


...BUT I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THIS  
MYSTERY AROUND THE YOUNGER CATS  
WOULD REAR ITS HEAD AGAIN.

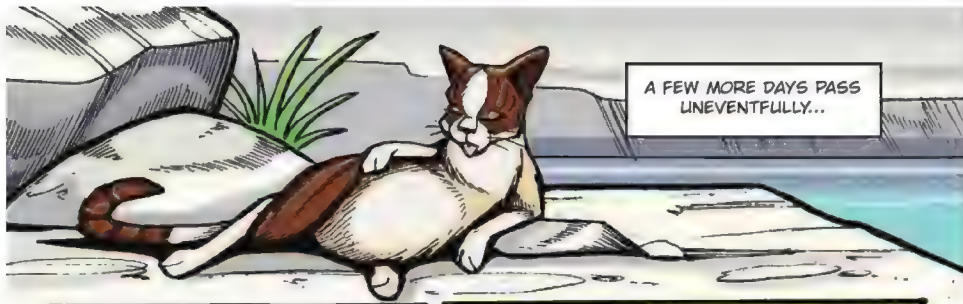


AND JUST WHERE  
DO YOU LOT THINK  
YOU'RE GOING?









A FEW MORE DAYS PASS  
UNEVENTFULLY...



BUT I CAN TELL SOMETHING  
IS UP JUST FROM THE WAY  
ECHOSONG IS WALKING.

WHAT'S  
WRONG?



OH, IT'S  
BIRDPAW'S EYE.

IT HASN'T BEEN  
IMPROVING THE  
WAY I WANT IT TO.

I MAY HAVE TO KEEP HER  
CONFINED TO THE MEDICINE DEN FOR  
A FEW DAYS. I'M AFRAID SHE NEEDS  
SOME INTENSIVE TREATMENT.



LEAFSTAR!

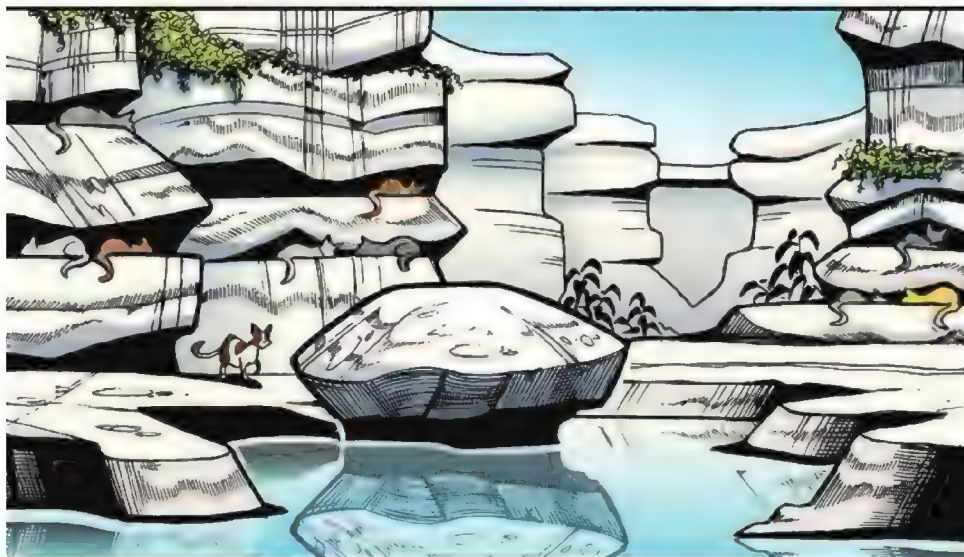
"WELL, I'LL GET SHARPCLAW  
TO SEND HER OVER AS SOON AS  
SHE'S BACK FROM PATROL."



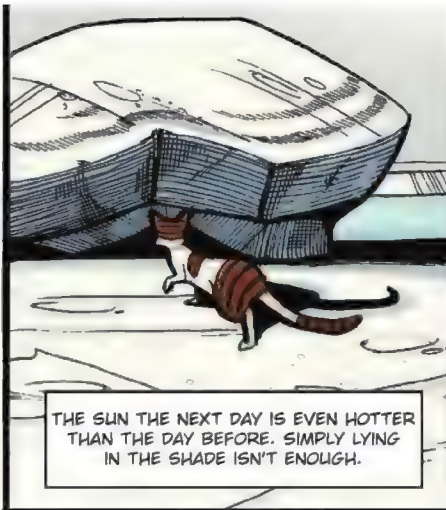
SHARPCLAW  
SAID YOU WANTED  
TO SEE ME?











THE SUN THE NEXT DAY IS EVEN HOTTER THAN THE DAY BEFORE. SIMPLY LYING IN THE SHADE ISN'T ENOUGH.



WHICH IS WHAT LEADS ME HERE.



WHERE I SOON FIND MORE THAN JUST RELIEF FROM THE HEAT.

I DON'T SEE WHY I CAN'T TELL TINYCLOUD-- IT COULD HELP THE CLAN!

NO, YOU CAN'T!

YOU MUSTN'T!



THIS IS OUR SECRET. IF WE TELL ANYONE ELSE, IT'LL SPOIL EVERYTHING.

CLOVERTAIL ALWAYS SAID SECRETS SHOULD BE TOLD IF THEY MADE ANYONE FEEL BAD.

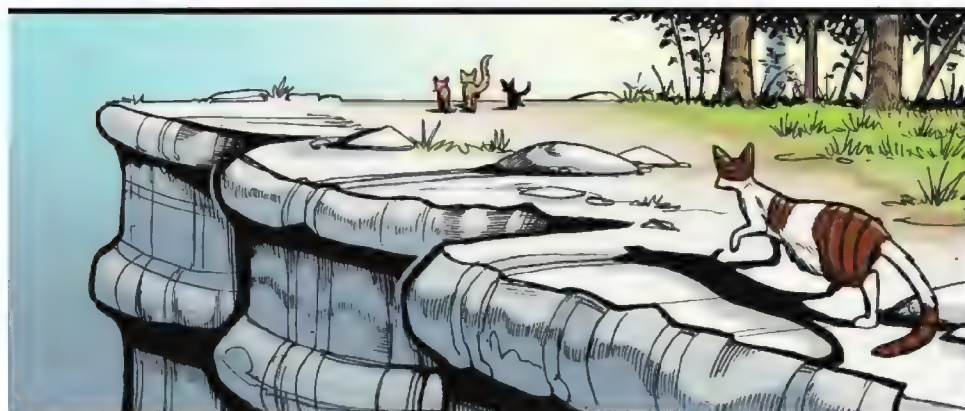
AND THIS SECRET IS STARTING TO MAKE ME FEEL BAD!









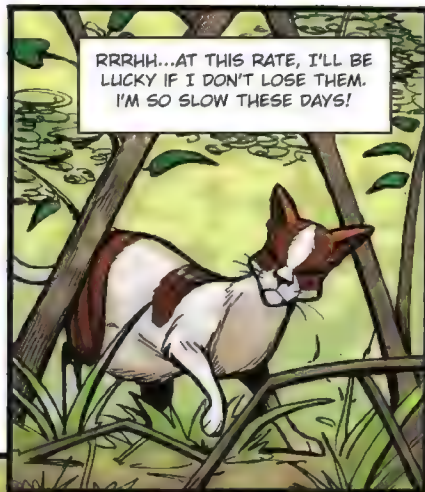




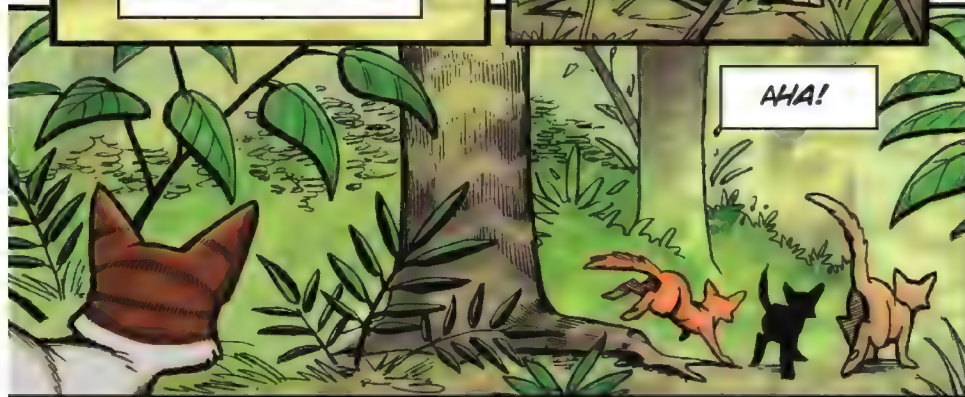


sniff  
sniff

THERE WE GO...I CAN  
SMELL ECHOSONG'S HERBAL  
OINTMENT ON BIRDPAW'S EYE.



RRRHH...AT THIS RATE, I'LL BE  
LUCKY IF I DON'T LOSE THEM.  
I'M SO SLOW THESE DAYS!



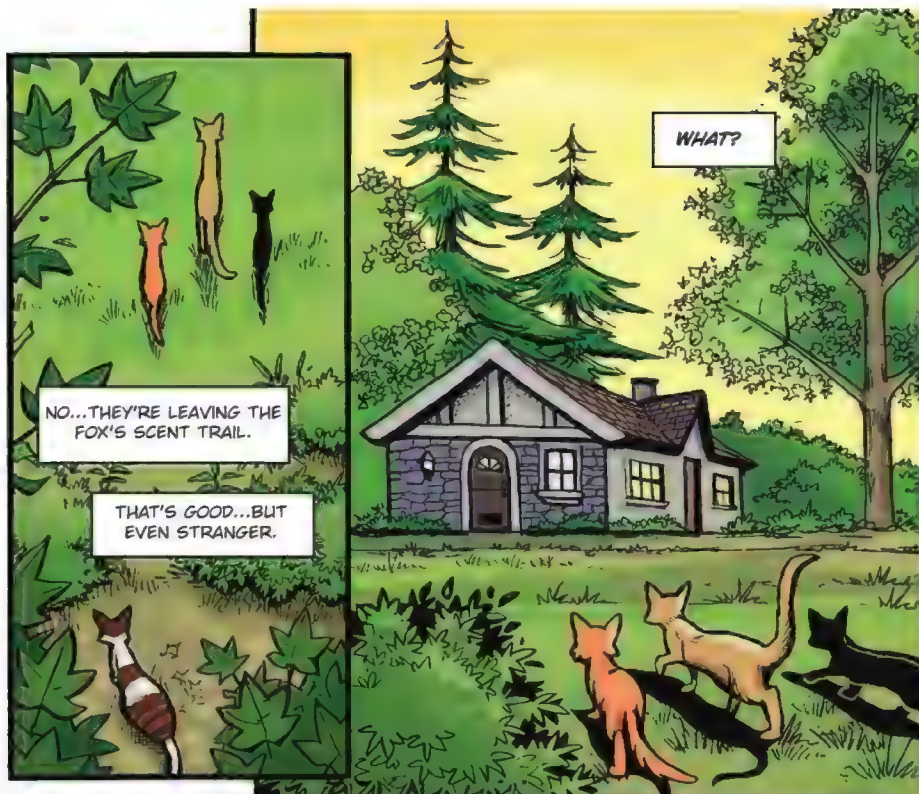
AHA!



WAIT A MOMENT...THIS IS THE FOX  
TRAIL. SURELY THE APPRENTICES  
AREN'T HUNTING FOXES?

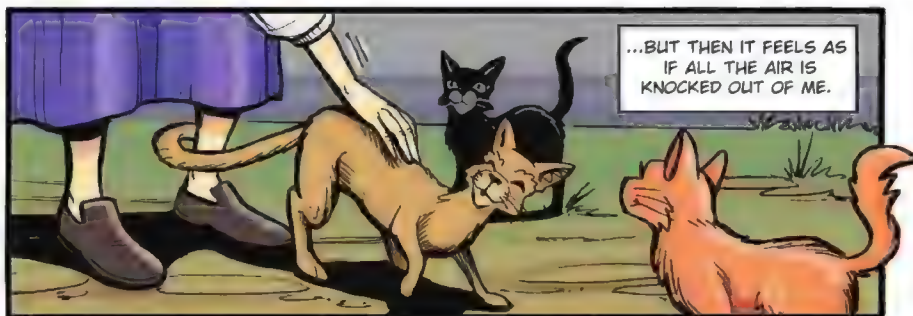














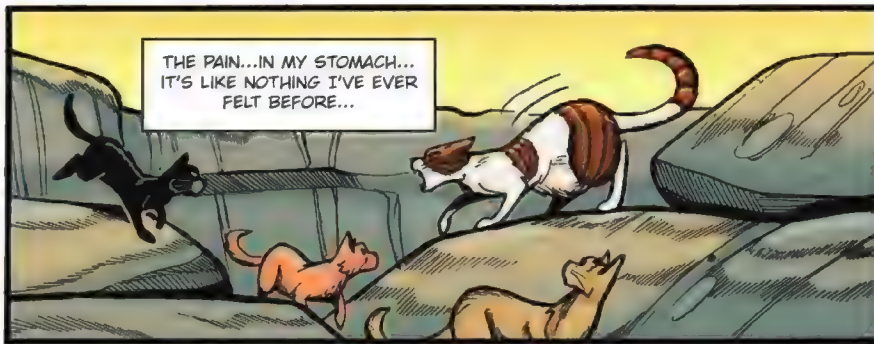




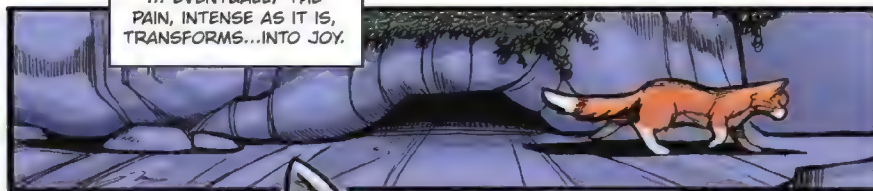
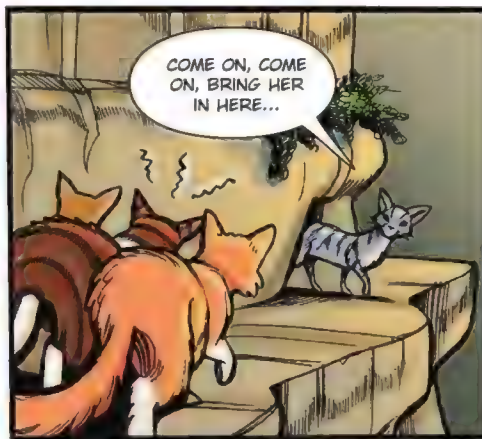




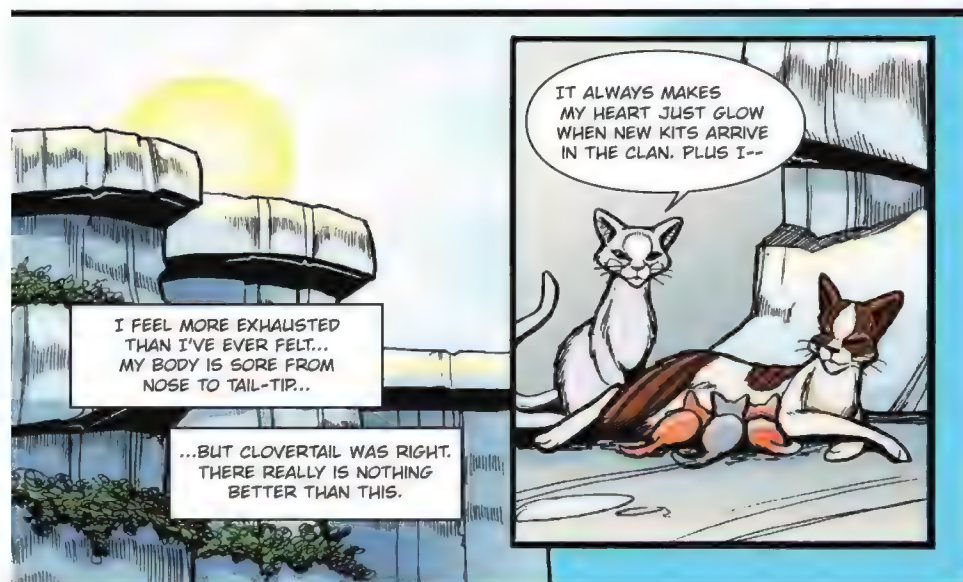
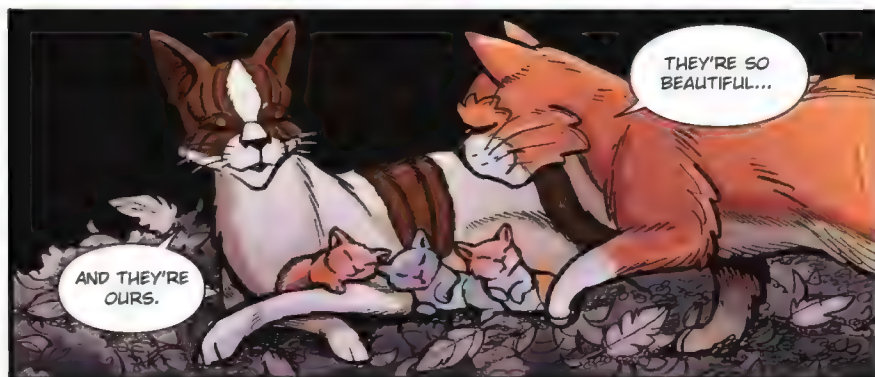






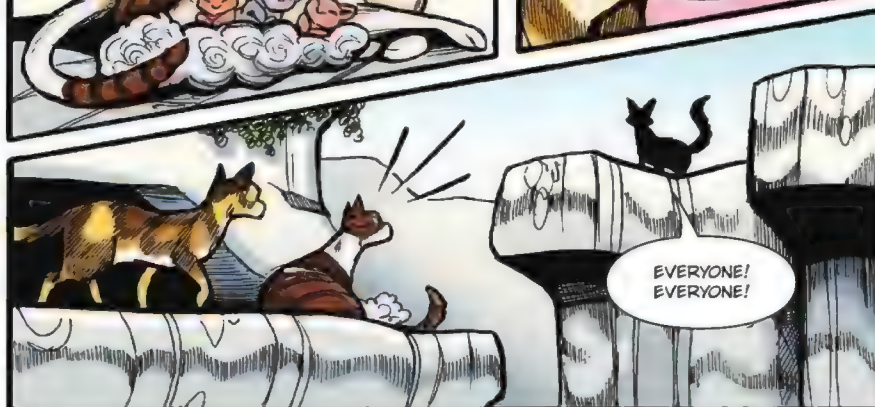
































I'M COMING,  
LITTLE ONE!



I THINK YOU SHOULD  
COME BACK WITH ME.



OH, LOOK HOW  
CUTE THEY ARE!

AND WHAT'S THAT  
I HEAR? IS IT YOUR  
BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

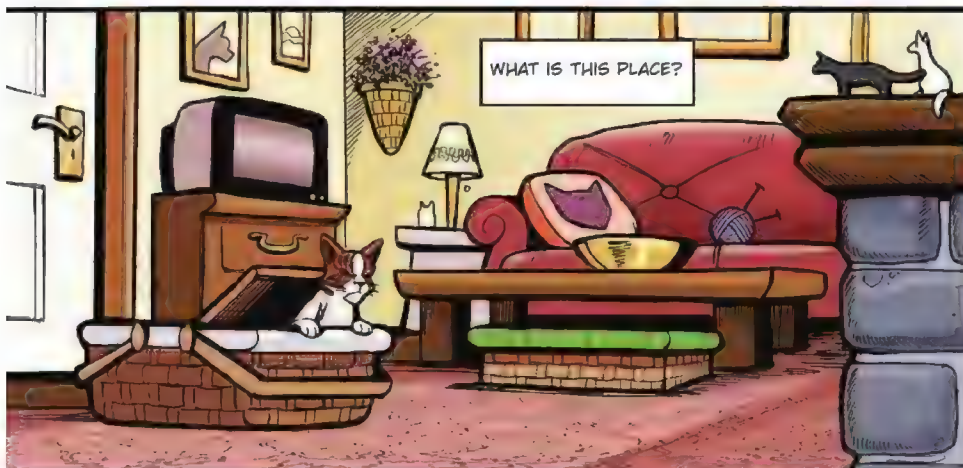
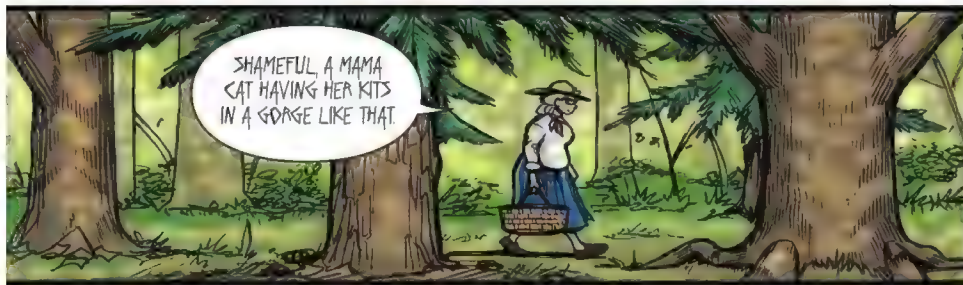


YOU'LL COME  
HOME WITH ME  
RIGHT AWAY











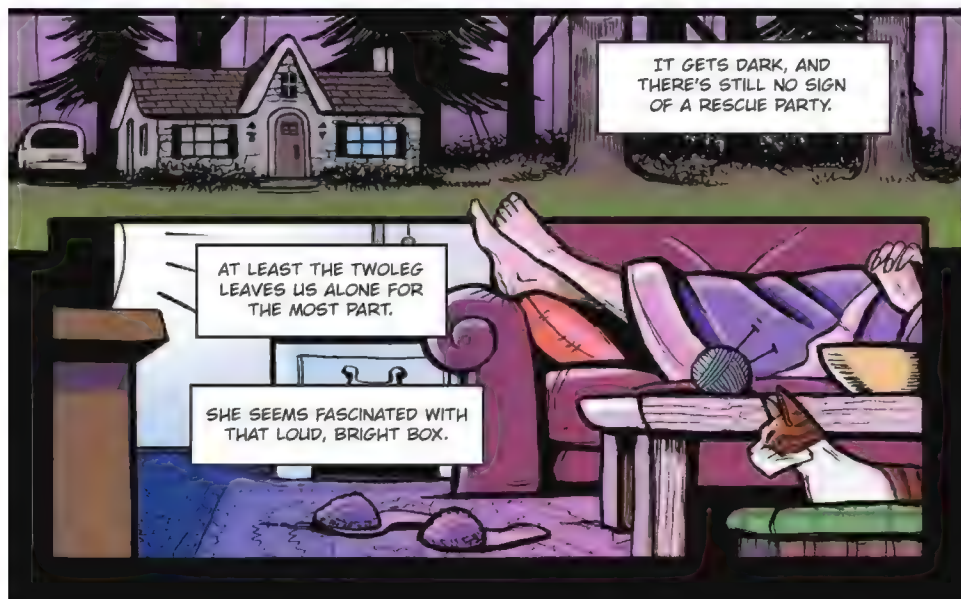
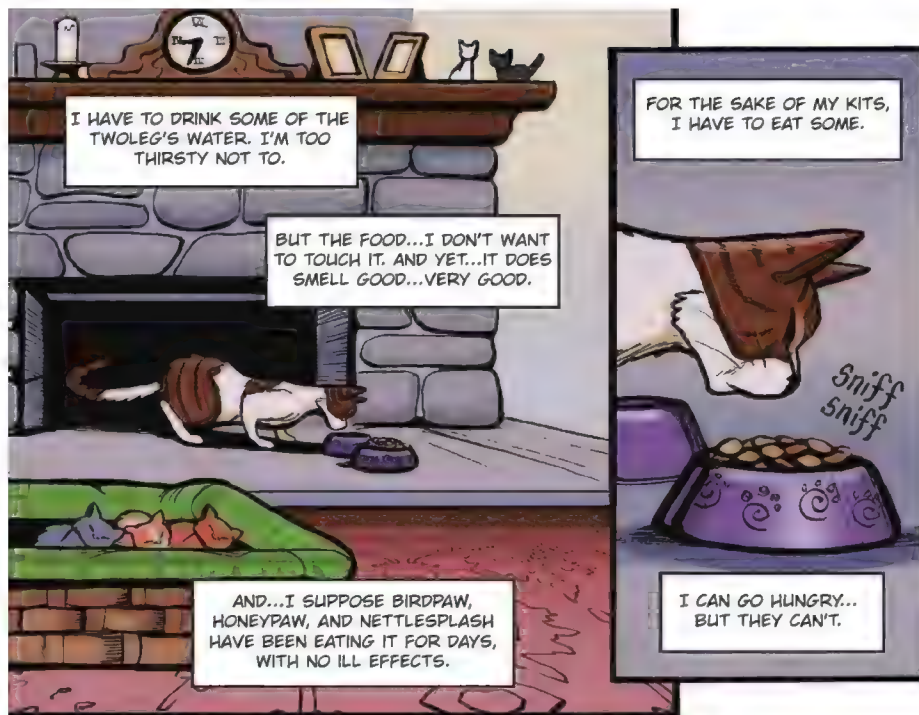






















EVERYONE,  
THIS IS HARRY.

HARRY, THESE ARE  
OUR NEW VISITORS. THEY  
HAVEN'T TOLD ME WHAT  
THEIR NAMES ARE YET.



YOU'RE ONE OF  
THOSE WILD CATS  
THAT LIVE IN THE  
GORGE, RIGHT?

IT'S SKYCLAN.  
THAT'S THE NAME OF OUR  
GROUP. AND I'M THEIR  
LEADER, LEAFSTAR.



YOU DON'T LOOK  
LIKE MUCH OF A LEADER  
RIGHT NOW. ARE THOSE  
YOUR KITS?

OF COURSE  
THEY ARE!

WHY DID YOU  
BRING THEM  
HERE?

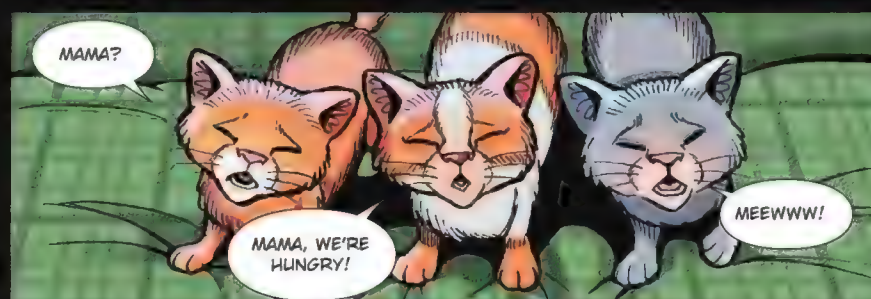
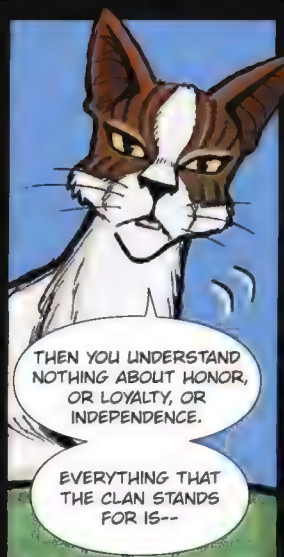


I DIDN'T. I WAS  
STOLEN BY YOUR TWOLEG,  
ALONG WITH MY  
NEW LITTER!

WHY DIDN'T YOU  
RUN AWAY? SHE  
CAN'T RUN VERY FAST,  
YOU KNOW.

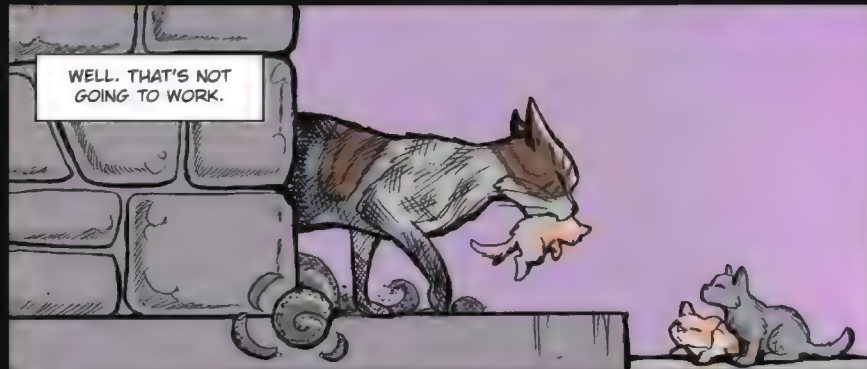
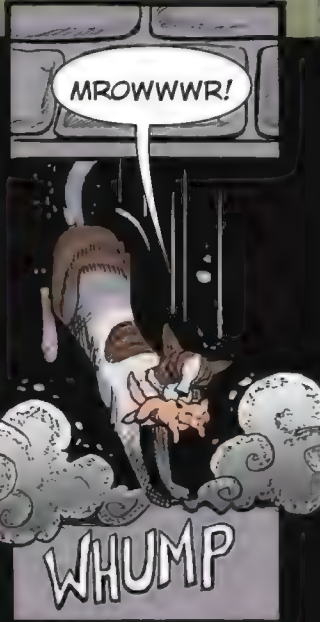
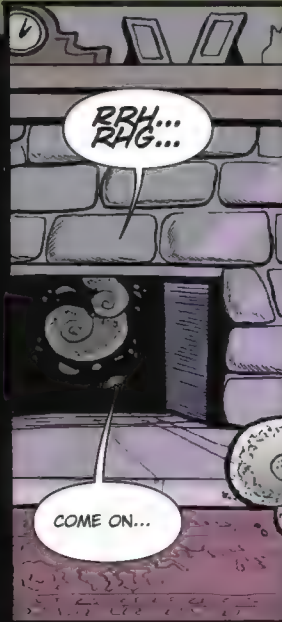
I COULDN'T  
ABANDON MY KITS!



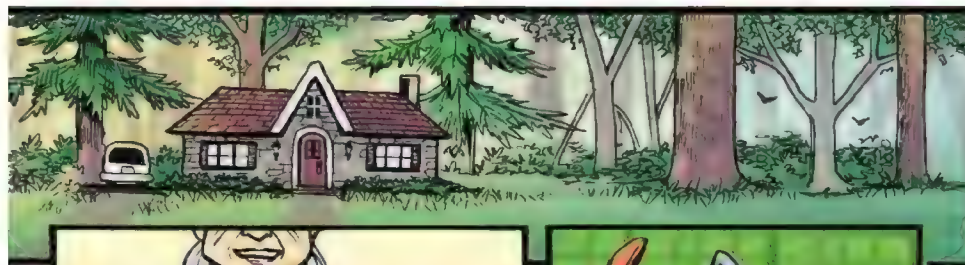




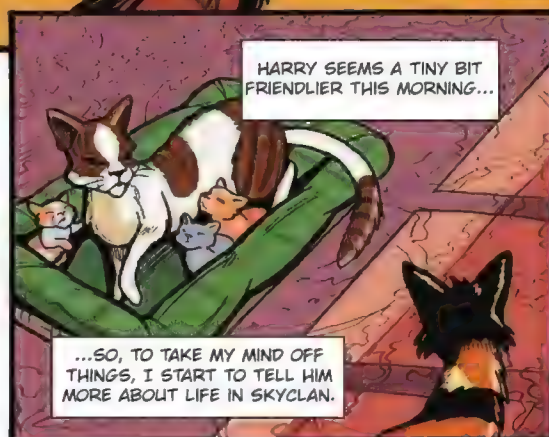






















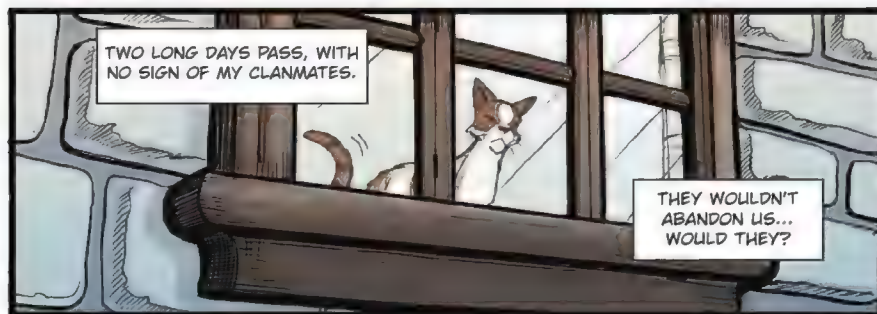








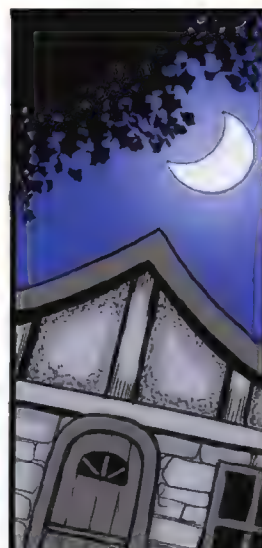
















I DREAM AGAIN.

THIS TIME I'M WITH MY  
KITS, BACK IN SKYCLAN...

...BUT THE CLAN HAS  
LEFT ME. LEFT US.

HOW? HOW COULD THEY  
ABANDON US LIKE THIS?

MRRROOWWWW!

I KNOW THAT  
VOICE...!

IT'S FALLOWFERN!











OH DEAR! WHAT  
HAVE YOU DONE TO  
YOUR POOR LEG?



YOU POOR THING!  
I'LL HAVE YOU FIXED  
UP IN NO TIME

YOU CAN STAY THE  
NIGHT, BUT I'M AFRAID I  
CAN'T LET YOU GO INTO  
THE SITTING ROOM.

WE ALREADY HAVE  
SOME GUESTS IN THERE  
NOW. HERE YOU GO SOME  
NICE FOOD AND SOME  
MILK



IN THE MORNING WE'LL  
TAKE A LOOK AT THAT  
LEG, AND SEE IF YOU NEED  
TO GO TO MR. VETERINARIAN,  
WON'T WE?



CLICK



LEAFSTAR! I'M OKAY!  
I WAS JUST PRETENDING  
TO HAVE A BAD LEG  
SO THE TWOLEG  
WOULD LET ME IN!

THE OTHERS ARE  
OUTSIDE. I'M GOING TO  
GET YOU OUT OF HERE!







BUT THE DOOR  
IS SHUT! I'M STILL  
STUCK IN HERE!

IF YOU CAN OPEN IT,  
WE CAN ESCAPE!  
THERE'S A FLAP IN THE  
DOOR IN HERE!

DO YOU REALLY  
WANT TO LEAVE? IS  
LIVING IN A CLAN THAT  
WONDERFUL?

YES. YES, IT IS.  
HELP ME...  
PLEASE!

WELL...THAT METAL  
THING RIGHT UP THERE  
IS CALLED A LATCH. AND  
IF YOU CAN TURN IT, THE  
DOOR WILL OPEN.

THOUGH I CAN'T SEE  
HOW YOU'LL GET UP  
THERE TO REACH IT.

I'LL JUMP.

IT'S WHAT  
SKYCLAN  
CATS DO.

SWISH

COME ON...









LEAFSTAR!

CRASH

THIS IS OUR CHANCE...

BUT THE KITS ARE  
WRIGGLING SO MUCH IT'S  
IMPOSSIBLE  
TO CARRY TWO.

GOODNESS  
GRACIOUS! WHAT  
WAS THAT?

PLEASE...  
PLEASE, HARRY.  
WILL YOU  
HELP US?

WELL...

I HOPE NO  
ONE'S HURT.

OF COURSE  
I WILL.







WE'RE GOING TO MAKE IT...  
WE'RE GOING TO MAKE  
IT...!

YES!

NOW RUN!

GOODNESS  
GRACIOUS WHERE DID  
EVERYONE GO?

THANK YOU, HARRY.  
I OWE YOU A  
GREAT DEAL.

YOU'RE SURE  
YOU HAVE TO  
LEAVE?

YES...YOUR TWOLEG  
WAS VERY KIND TO  
ME, BUT THIS IS NOT  
WHERE I BELONG.

GOOD-BYE,  
HARRY!





MY DEN HAS NEVER,  
EVER BEEN AS COMFORTABLE  
AS IT WAS LAST NIGHT.

ESPECIALLY SINCE  
BILLYSTORM STAYED THE  
WHOLE NIGHT WITH US. HE  
CAN'T DO THAT VERY OFTEN.

AND NOW IT'S TIME TO SEE  
IF I CAN BRING THE CLAN  
BACK TO NORMAL.

CLOVERTAIL WATCHES OVER MY  
KITS FOR ME WHILE I SPEAK.

"WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT  
YOUR CLAN?" HARRY ASKED.

THAT'S WHAT'S SO GREAT  
ABOUT MY CLAN. WE WORK  
TOGETHER. WE ARE ONE.

I'M PROUD TO BE  
THE LEADER OF A STRONG  
CLAN THAT LOOKS OUT FOR  
ALL ITS CATS, YOUNG AND  
OLD, BIG AND SMALL.

...I WON'T EVER LET  
MYSELF BE CAUGHT  
OFF GUARD BY A  
TWOLEG AGAIN.







I ALSO NEED TO THANK  
FALLOWFERN FOR HER  
BRILLIANT PLAN...



OH--ACTUALLY  
THAT WAS  
BIRDPAW'S IDEA.

SHE THOUGHT THE  
TWOLEG PUT THAT  
GREASY STUFF ON HER  
EYE TO HELP IT...



WELL, BIRDPAW,  
IT WAS AN  
EXCELLENT IDEA...

...BUT YOU MUST  
ALSO REMEMBER,  
ALWAYS, THAT YOU  
ARE A CLAN CAT...YOU  
AND THE REST OF  
THE APPRENTICES...



...AND THAT YOU  
NEVER TAKE FOOD  
FROM TWOLEGS.











WELL, YOU'D...  
YOU'D BE WELCOME,  
OF COURSE...



YOU REALIZE, YOU'D  
HAVE TO TRAIN TO BE A  
WARRIOR. JUST AS  
WE ALL DID.

OF COURSE.

YOU'LL LEARN TO  
HUNT FOR US, GUARD THE  
BORDERS, BE WILLING TO  
GIVE UP YOUR LIFE FOR YOUR  
CLANMATES.



I'M WILLING TO  
LEARN WHAT I  
NEED TO.

WELL, THEN...  
WELCOME TO  
SKYCLAN!

ACTUALLY, THERE'S  
SOMEONE YOU NEED TO  
MEET, FOR THE SECOND TIME.



THIS IS  
HARRYKIT.

I HOPE YOU  
DON'T MIND, WE  
NAMED HIM  
AFTER YOU.



HARRY'S NOT  
MY REAL NAME.

THAT'S JUST  
WHAT THE TWOLEG  
CALLS ME.









# WARRIORS

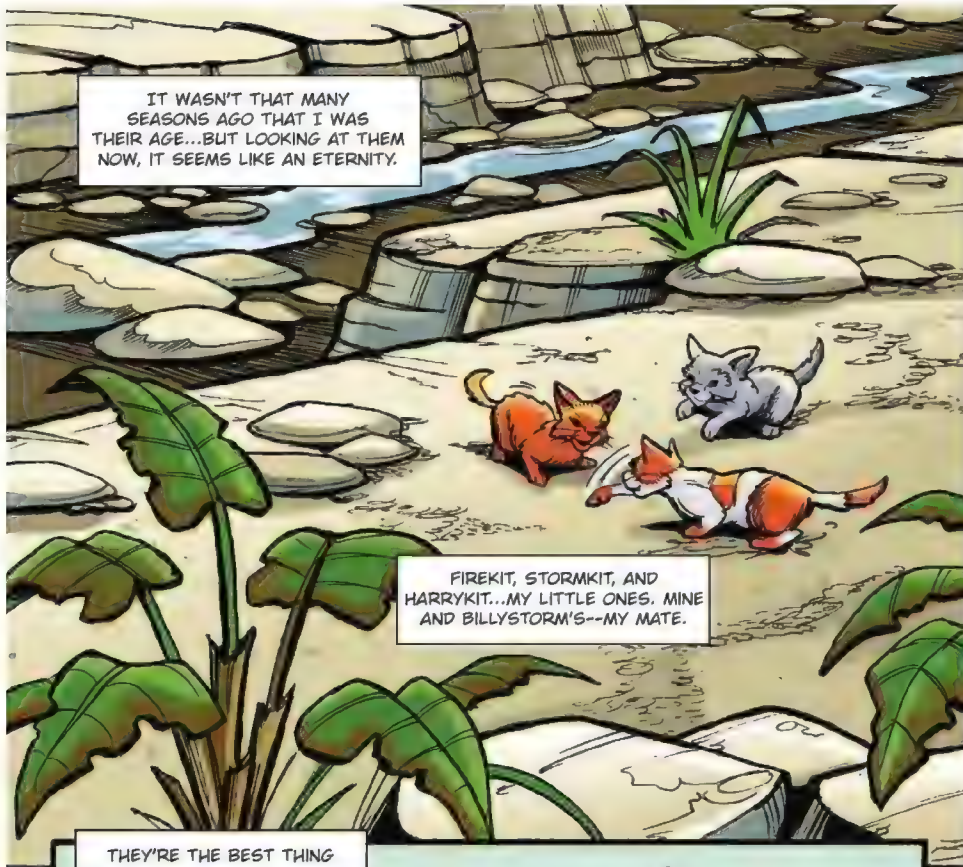
BEYOND THE  
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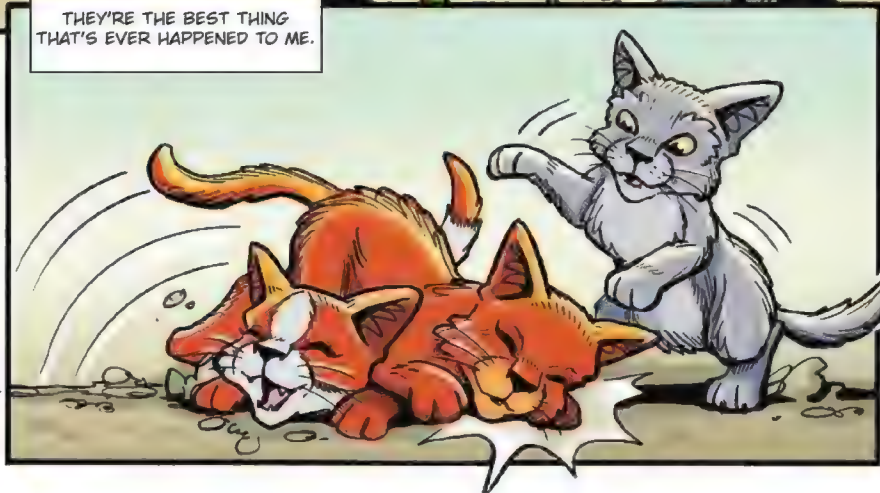


IT WASN'T THAT MANY  
SEASONS AGO THAT I WAS  
THEIR AGE...BUT LOOKING AT THEM  
NOW, IT SEEMS LIKE AN ETERNITY.



FIREKIT, STORMKIT, AND  
HARRYKIT...MY LITTLE ONES. MINE  
AND BILLYSTORM'S--MY MATE.

THEY'RE THE BEST THING  
THAT'S EVER HAPPENED TO ME.

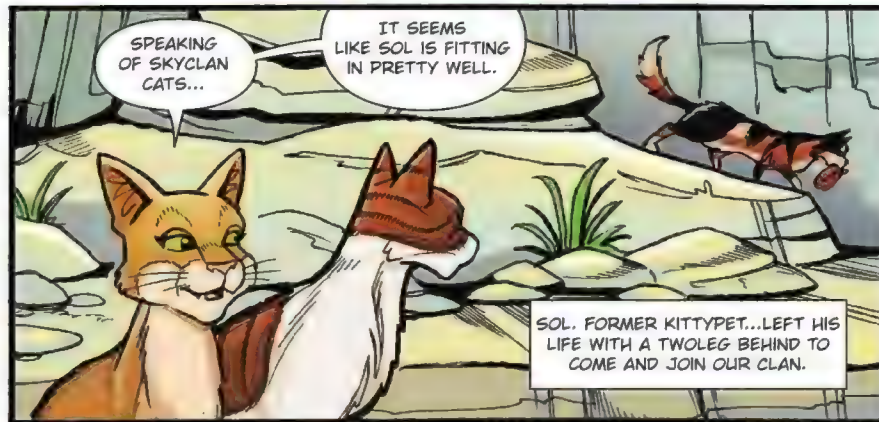




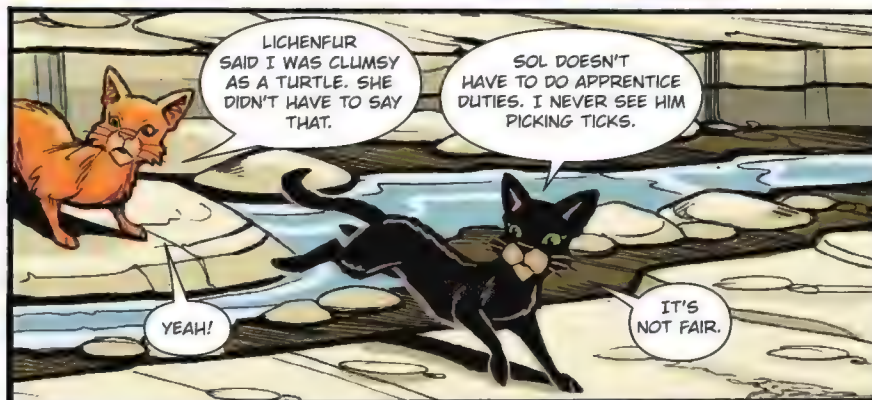
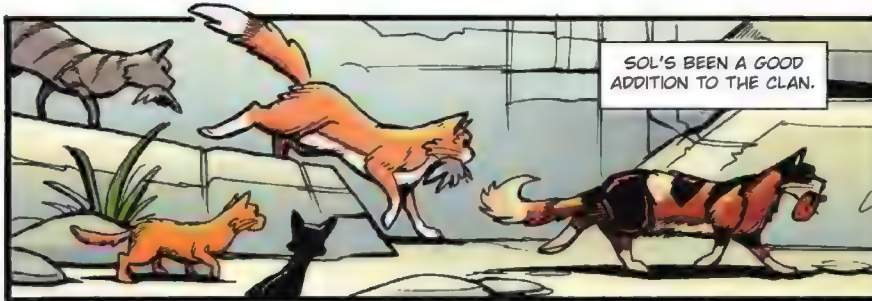














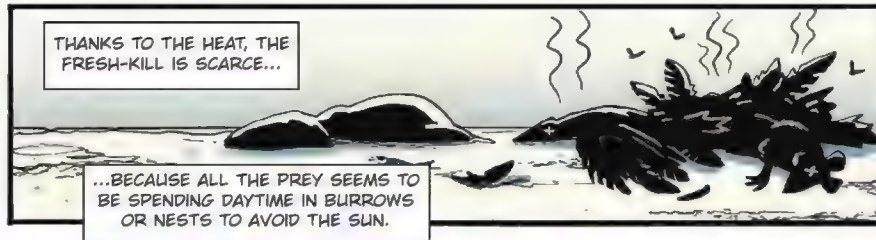




IT'S BEEN HOT LATELY. VERY HOT. I DON'T KNOW THAT I CAN REMEMBER THE LAST TIME IT FELT LIKE THIS, FOR THIS LONG.

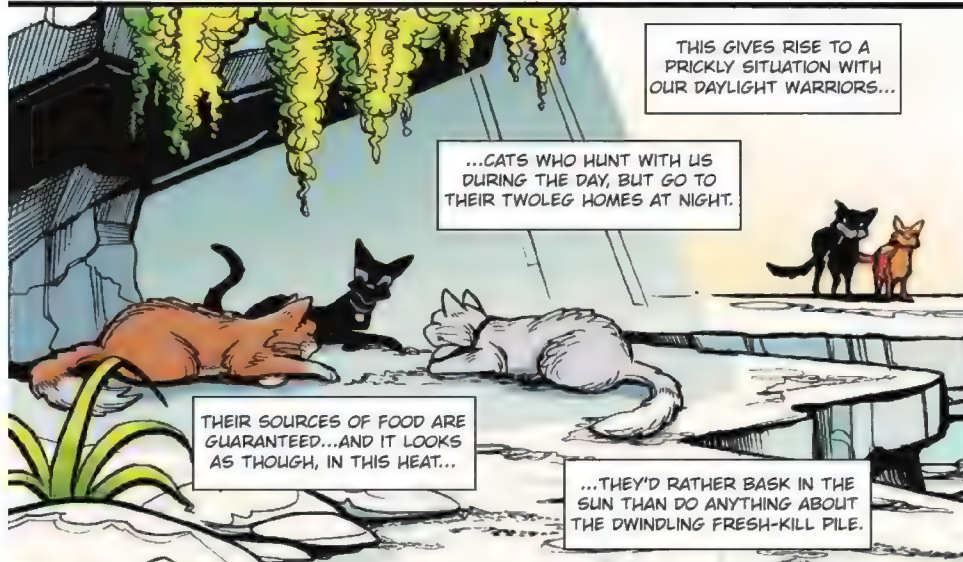






THANKS TO THE HEAT, THE  
FRESH-KILL IS SCARCE...

...BECAUSE ALL THE PREY SEEMS TO  
BE SPENDING DAYTIME IN BURROWS  
OR NESTS TO AVOID THE SUN.



THIS GIVES RISE TO A  
PRICKLY SITUATION WITH  
OUR DAYLIGHT WARRIORS...

...CATS WHO HUNT WITH US  
DURING THE DAY, BUT GO TO  
THEIR TWOLEG HOMES AT NIGHT.

THEIR SOURCES OF FOOD ARE  
GUARANTEED...AND IT LOOKS  
AS THOUGH, IN THIS HEAT...

...THEY'D RATHER BASK IN THE  
SUN THAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT  
THE DWINDLING FRESH-KILL PILE.



EVEN MY DAYLIGHT WARRIOR  
MATE, BILLYSTORM, DOESN'T SEEM  
TOO ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT GOING  
OUT ON ANOTHER PATROL.

HMMPH.  
"DAYLIGHT  
WARRIORS."



WHAT WAS  
THAT, ROCKSHADE?  
DID YOU WANT TO SAY  
SOMETHING?

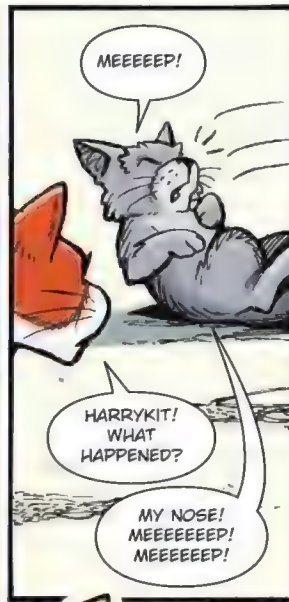
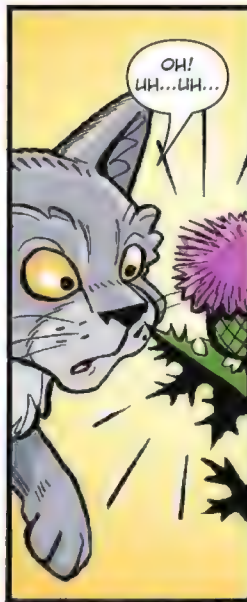
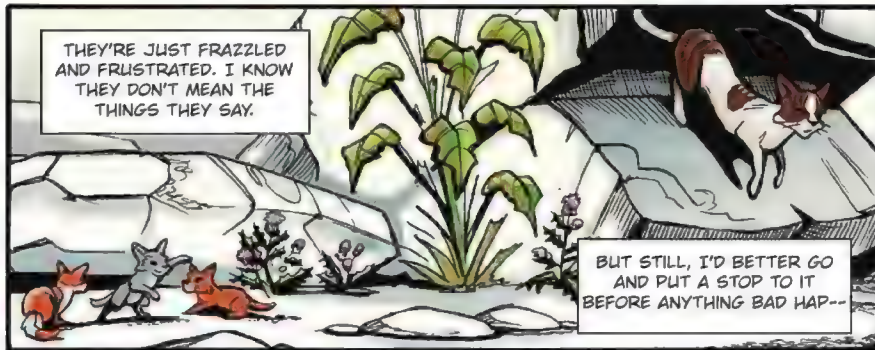
SURE--HOW  
ABOUT THIS? "WHY DON'T  
YOU START PULLING  
YOUR WEIGHT AROUND  
HERE FOR ONCE?"























BY DOZE!  
BY DOZE IS  
DESTROYED!

DON'T WORRY,  
HARRYKIT! WE WON'T  
LET YOU DIE! WE'LL FIND  
SOME WAY TO SAVE  
YOUR POOR NOSE!

I THINK BILLYSTORM  
MIGHT BE IN OVER HIS  
HEAD WITH THE  
LITTLE ONES. GO ON.  
SEE TO YOUR KITS.

I'LL SORT  
THIS OUT.

...THANK  
YOU.

THE WEIGHT OF TRYING TO LEAD  
A CLAN AND BE A MOTHER HAS  
BEEN HEAVY ON MY SHOULDERS...

...SINCE THE DAY I REALIZED  
I WAS GOING TO HAVE KITS.

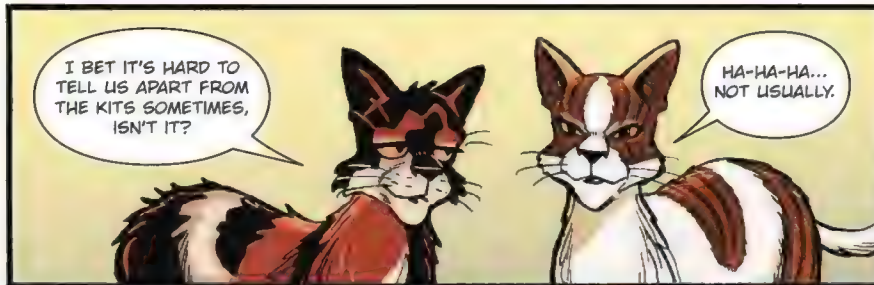
NOW...WITH A YOUNG ONE CRYING  
IN FRONT OF ME AND WARRIORS  
GRUMBLING BEHIND ME...

...IT FEELS AS IF THAT WEIGHT  
MIGHT FINALLY CRUSH ME.



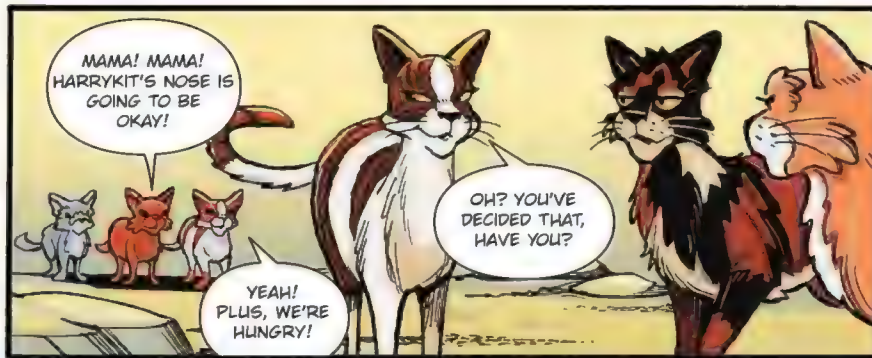
















THEY HAVE ENOUGH FRESH-KILL TO LAST THE DAY--NO USE STORING IT ANYWAY SINCE IT SPOILS SO FAST IN THIS HEAT.

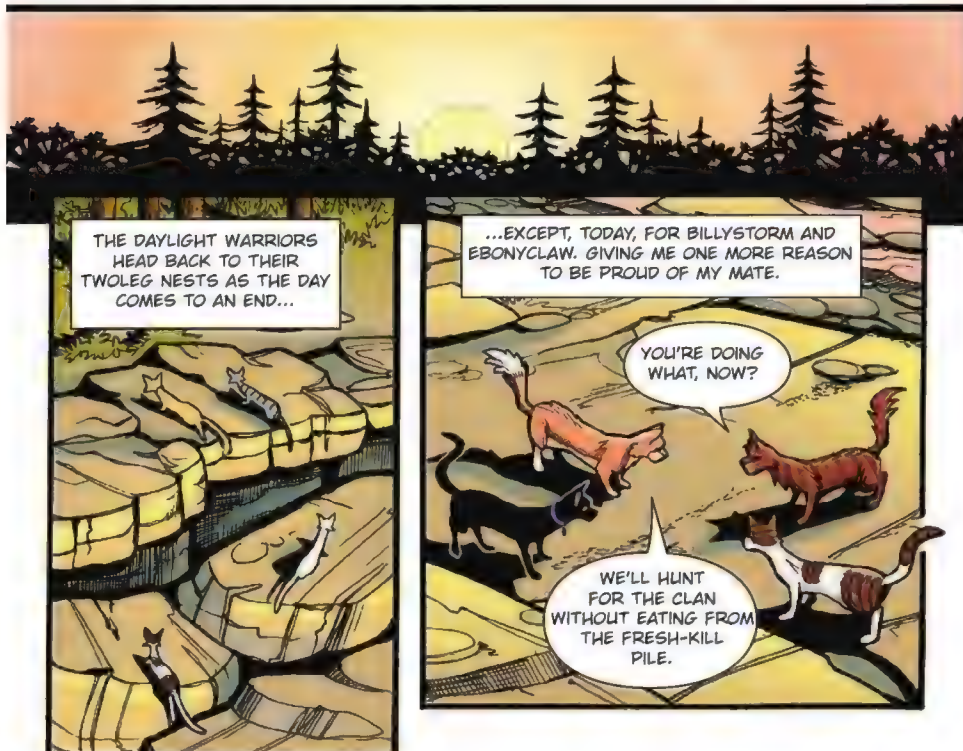


THAT'S A GOOD THOUGHT. GO AHEAD.

THANKS.

SHARPCLAW IS A FANTASTIC DEPUTY. I'M NOT SURE HOW I WOULD HAVE MANAGED WITHOUT HIM.

BUT THEN, I GUESS THAT'S WHAT THE CLAN IS ALL ABOUT. HELPING EACH OTHER.



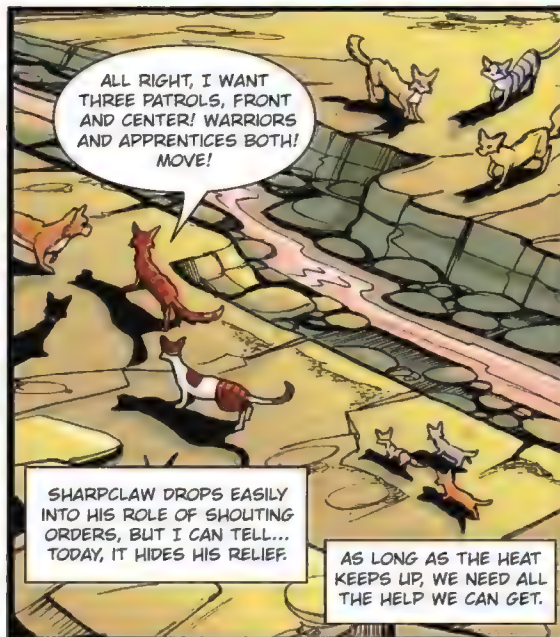
THE DAYLIGHT WARRIORS HEAD BACK TO THEIR TWOLEG NESTS AS THE DAY COMES TO AN END...

...EXCEPT, TODAY, FOR BILLYSTORM AND EBONYCLAW. GIVING ME ONE MORE REASON TO BE PROUD OF MY MATE.

YOU'RE DOING WHAT, NOW?

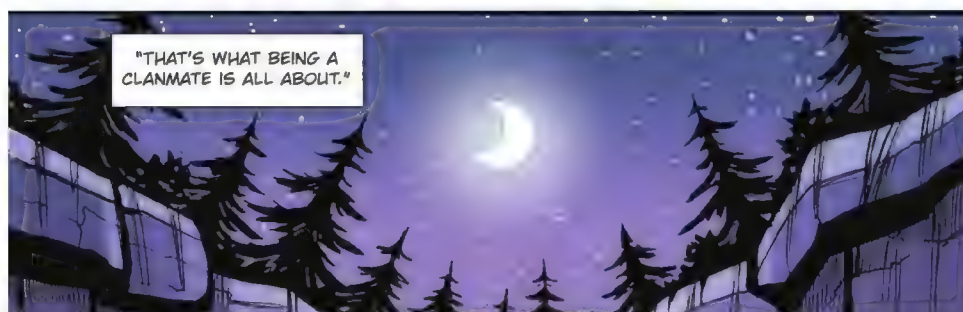
WE'LL HUNT FOR THE CLAN WITHOUT EATING FROM THE FRESH-KILL PILE.





















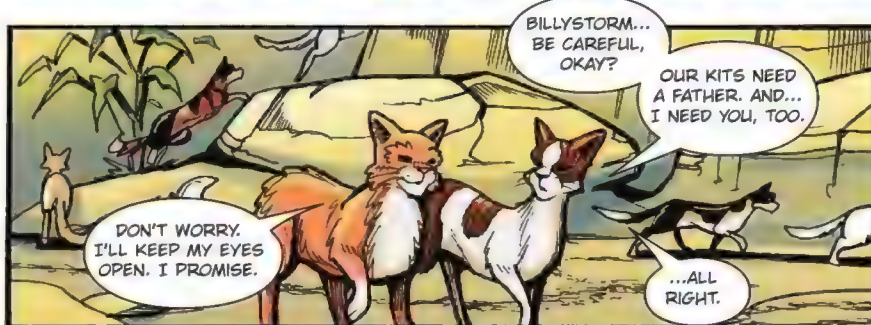






















BILLYSTORM RETURNS SAFELY,  
AND I THANK STARCLAN FOR THAT...  
BUT I CAN SEE THE DISAPPOINTMENT  
ON HIS FACE.



IT'S JUST AS WE FEARED:  
EIGHT CATS IN A GROUP CAN  
BARELY  
CATCH ANYTHING WORTH EATING.



UM...  
WE'RE BACK,  
TOO.



PATCHFOOT, WHAT  
HAPPENED? WHERE IS  
EVERYONE ELSE?

WELL, SEE,  
SOL HAD AN  
IDEA...

WHAT?  
WHAT IDEA?

HE, UM...WELL,  
HE DIDN'T EXACTLY SAY,  
BUT HE TALKED US INTO  
LETTING HIM SPLIT THE  
PATROL IN TWO.



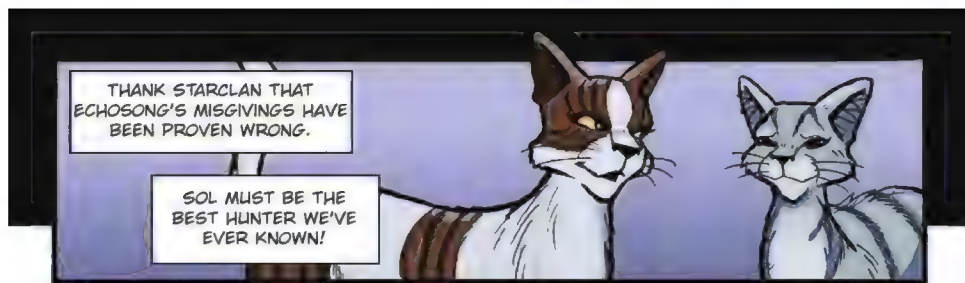












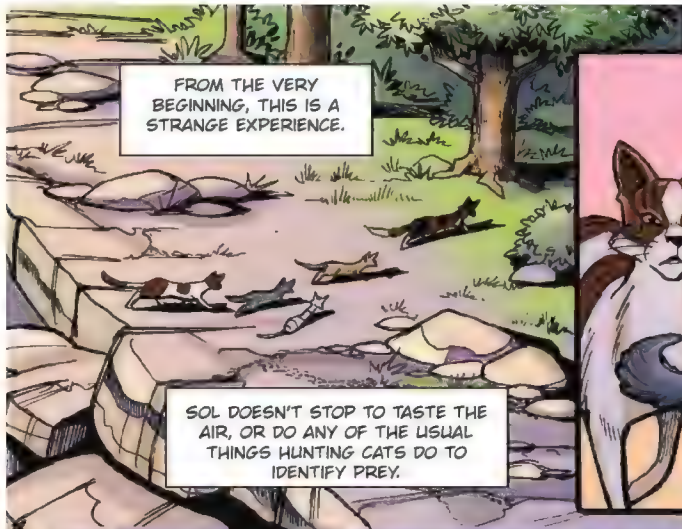












FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, THIS IS A STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

SOL DOESN'T STOP TO TASTE THE AIR, OR DO ANY OF THE USUAL THINGS HUNTING CATS DO TO IDENTIFY PREY.



THIS IS NO HUNTING TECHNIQUE I'M FAMILIAR WITH.

IT'S DIFFERENT HUNTING, LEAFSTAR! JUST WATCH!



I CAN HEAR THE UNDERGROWTH RUSTLING WITH PREY. SQUIRRELS SIT IN TREES DIRECTLY ABOVE US. BIRDS PECK ON THE GROUND NEARBY.

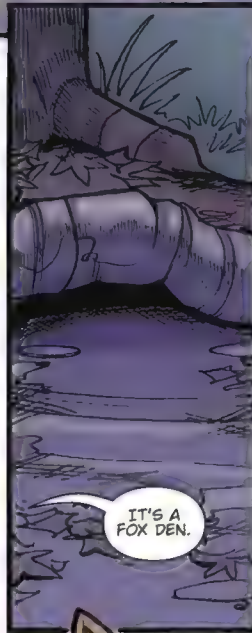
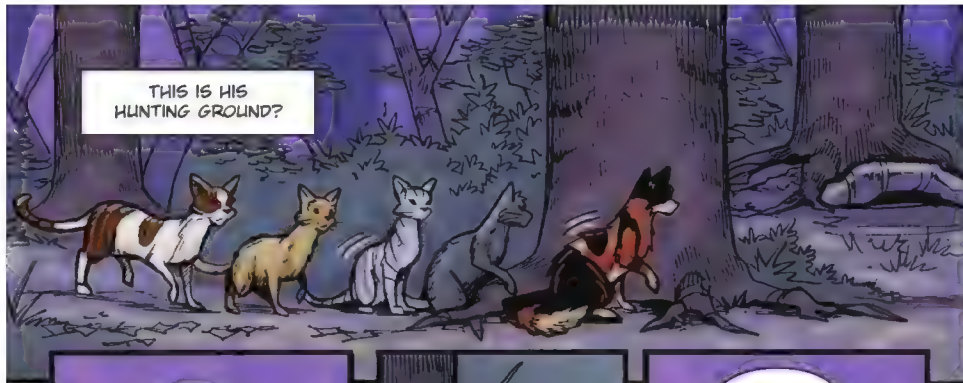
YET SOL IGNORES ALL OF THAT.



WHAT'S HE UP TO?

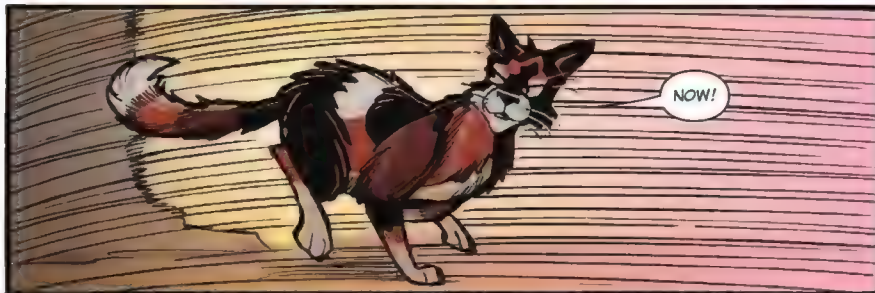
SOON WE ENTER PART OF THE WOODS I'VE BARELY BEEN TO BEFORE...MAINLY BECAUSE THERE'S NOT MUCH PREY HERE.





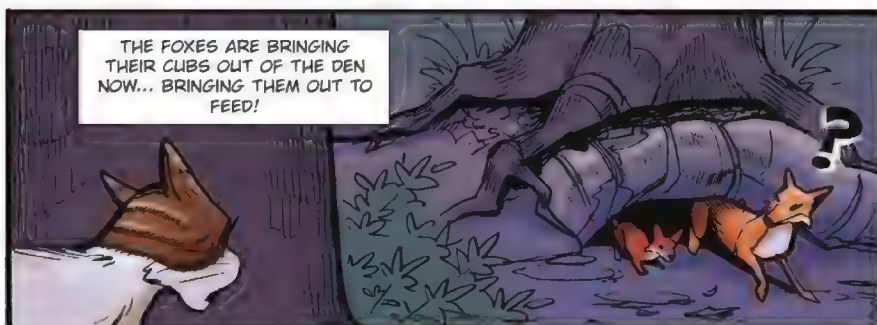




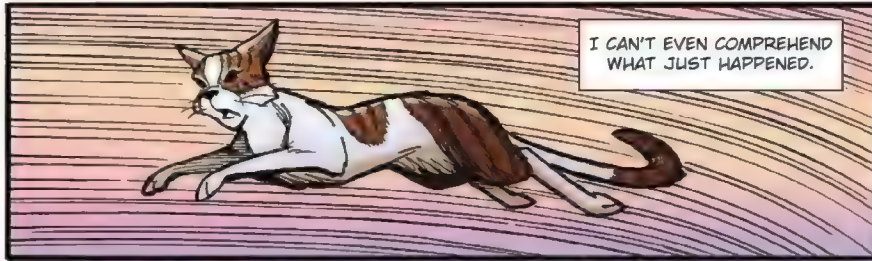












I CAN'T EVEN COMPREHEND  
WHAT JUST HAPPENED.



SEE, LEAFSTAR?  
IF THE FOXES WANT  
TO HUNT AT DUSK, WE'LL  
LET THEM DO OUR HUNTING  
FOR US AS WELL!

SOL, THIS  
IS--I CAN'T EVEN  
BEGIN TO--



THIS IS THE  
ABSOLUTE WORST  
THING YOU COULD  
HAVE DONE!

YOU'VE JUST LEFT  
A TRAIL FOR THOSE FOXES  
ALL THE WAY TO OUR  
CAMP! WHAT IF THEY COME  
HERE AND ATTACK  
US?

WHAT? ...BUT  
I FIGURED--



THIS IS NOT  
HOW CLAN CATS  
HUNT! THEY USE  
SKILLS!

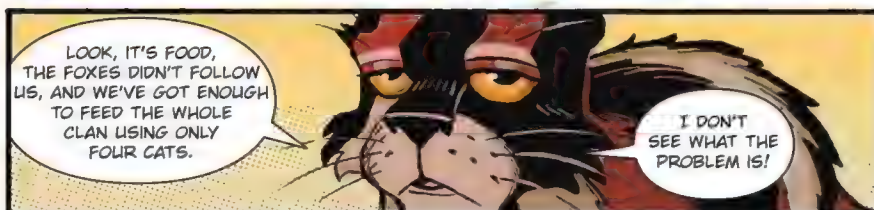
BUT THIS  
IS A SKILL...

NO, IT'S NOT. IT'S  
STEALING. STEALING  
FROM FOXES, NO LESS!  
YOU MUST STOP IT  
AT ONCE.

THAT'S  
AN ORDER!

















AT LEAST, I TRY  
TO PUT IT BEHIND US.



BUT ALL DAY, SOL AVOIDS  
THE REST OF THE CLAN AND...  
WELL, SULKS, MORE OR LESS.



I'M GRATEFUL WHEN  
WASPWISKER AND  
CHERRYTAIL APPROACH HIM.

HEY, SOL!

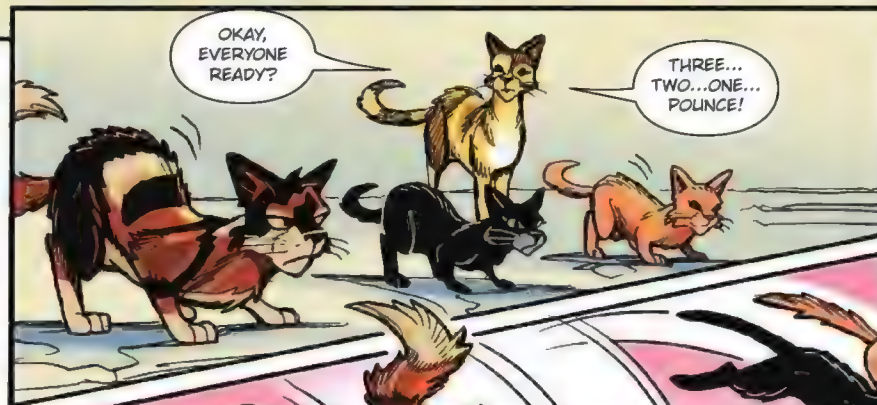


WE'RE ABOUT  
TO HAVE A HUNTING  
SKILLS SESSION WITH  
THE APPRENTICES.

WANT TO  
JOIN US?

UH...SURE!  
THAT'D BE GREAT.  
THANKS!











THE TRAINING SESSION DOES NOT GO WELL. I'M AFRAID HE'LL BE SULKING AGAIN IN NO TIME.



NOT EXACTLY A BORN HUNTER, IS HE?

SOL NEEDS SOME SPECIAL ATTENTION, SHARPCLAW. SOME ONE-ON-ONE TRAINING. ...I'LL DO IT MYSELF, IF I HAVE TO.

YOU'RE GOING TO A LOT OF TROUBLE FOR ONE CAT, LEAFSTAR.



HE WANTS TO BE A WARRIOR. WE OWE IT TO HIM TO GIVE HIM THE RIGHT TRAINING.

WE DON'T QUESTION APPRENTICES LIKE THIS, DO WE?

NO... YOU'RE RIGHT, WE DON'T.

I'LL ASK SOMEONE WHO KNOWS HIS WAY AROUND A HUNT TO SPEND SOME TIME WITH SOL. MAYBE PATCHFOOT. HE'S GOOD.



I'LL TELL YOU THIS, THOUGH. I'VE SEEN SOL TRY TO HUNT.

AND HE JUST DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE ANY NATURAL SKILLS.

AT ALL.





THOUGHT I HEARD...A  
FOOTSTEP?

tep

THERE IT IS AGAIN.

DID SHARPCLAW SEND  
OUT A NIGHT PATROL  
WITHOUT TELLING ME?















NOW!

I KNOW IF SHARPCLAW  
AND I WERE SIMPLY TALKING  
ABOUT A FIGHT LIKE THIS...

...HE'D TELL ME I NEED  
TO STAY BACK. OUT OF  
THE FIGHT, WHERE I CAN  
COMMAND.

BUT THESE FOXES ARE DEADLY.  
THEY COULD KILL ANY OF US IN A HEARTBEAT  
WITH ONE SNAP OF THOSE JAWS.

I CAN'T LET MY WARRIORS  
FACE THIS THREAT ALONE.  
IT WILL TAKE ALL OF US TO--

--TO...

...NO!





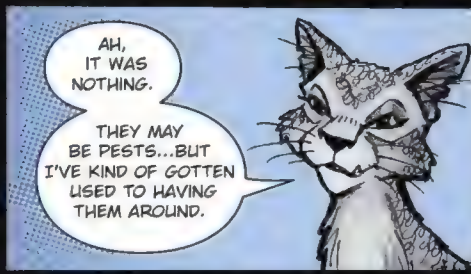


















BUT WE  
COULD HAVE  
HELPED, MAMA!



NO, YOU  
COULD NOT HAVE  
HELPED. YOU'RE  
ALL STILL TOO  
SMALL.

BUT--

NO, NO  
"BUTS." IF YOU  
PULL A STUNT LIKE  
THAT AGAIN, YOU'LL GET  
NOTHING BUT MOUSE TAILS  
FOR TWO DAYS.



LEAFSTAR...  
I...



I'M SO, SO  
SORRY. I JUST...

I JUST GOT  
SO SCARED.

AND I DIDN'T  
KNOW. I DIDN'T KNOW  
WHAT TO DO. HOW  
TO HELP.



WILL  
YOU...

ARE YOU GOING TO  
TELL THE REST OF THE CLAN  
THAT IT WAS MY FAULT  
THE FOXES CAME?

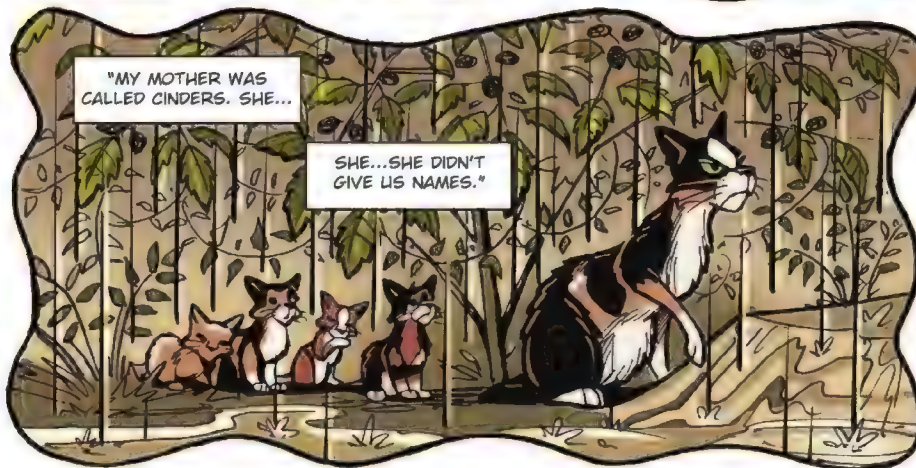
...NO. NO,  
THERE'D BE NO  
POINT. SOL...

LISTEN, MAYBE CLAN  
LIFE JUST ISN'T RIGHT FOR YOU.  
HUNTING AND FIGHTING ARE AT  
THE CENTER OF BEING A  
CLAN WARRIOR.

IT'S NOT YOUR  
FAULT IF YOU'RE JUST  
NOT BORN WITH THE  
RIGHT INSTINCTS.











"I'M NOT SURE CINDERS REALLY WANTED TO HAVE KITS. AND SHE DIDN'T HUNT VERY WELL."

QUIET, NOW. YOU HAVE TO BE QUIET SO YOU CAN LISTEN.

"BUT SHE TOLD US STORIES. TO GET US TO BEHAVE."

"SHE'D TELL US STORIES TO CHEER US UP. THEY WERE ALL ABOUT A CLAN OF CATS FROM LONG AGO..."

"CATS THAT WERE HEROIC... AND BRAVE...AND HONORABLE."

THESE CATS WERE ALL STRONG AND BEAUTIFUL...AND THEY CAME DOWN ON CLOUDS, LIKE SKY WARRIORS.

THEY GREW AS BIG AS LIONS WHEN THEY WERE ANGRY..







...AND THEY FOUGHT  
AS FIERCELY AS TIGERS  
WHEN THEY WENT INTO  
BATTLE.



THEY WERE MIGHTY  
HUNTERS, AND RAN AS FAST AS  
CHEETAHS WHEN THEY BROUGHT  
DOWN THEIR PREY.



AND THEY  
COULD FLY!



LIP INTO THE TREES  
TO HIDE FROM THEIR ENEMIES,  
AND TO CATCH BIRDS  
AND SQUIRRELS.







"CINDERS SAID THERE IS NOTHING TO BE SCARED OF BECAUSE THESE CATS ARE GOOD AND KIND AND ALWAYS LOOK OUT FOR THE WEAK."

"THEY ARE WARRIORS!" SHE'D SAY. 'NOT LIKE CATS TODAY.'"



"CINDERS WASN'T...WELL, SHE WASN'T VERY NICE TO BE AROUND, I DON'T THINK. SHE...COMPLAINED."

"A LOT."



"MAYBE THAT'S WHY OUR FATHER RARELY CAME BY. RARELY BROUGHT US ANY FOOD."

...FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN YOU IN MOONS, AND ALL YOU BRING US IS THIS ONE PITIFUL SHREW? IT'S TOO SOUR TO EAT! IT'S USELESS!

JUST LIKE YOU! WHAT KIND OF A FATHER TREATS HIS KITS THIS WAY?



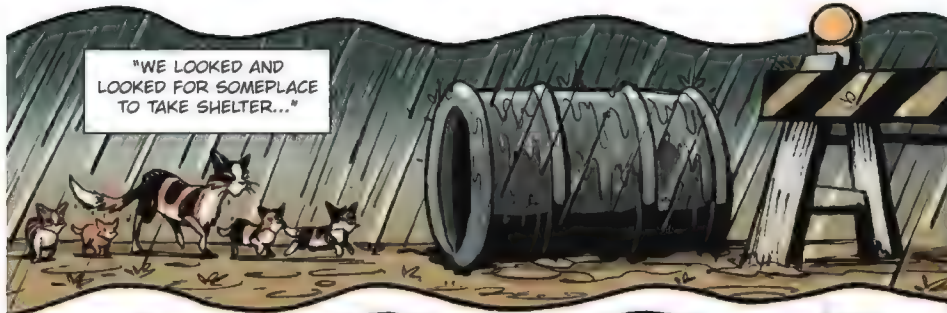
"HE NEVER WANTED TO PLAY WITH US."

"I DON'T THINK HE LIKED US VERY MUCH."



















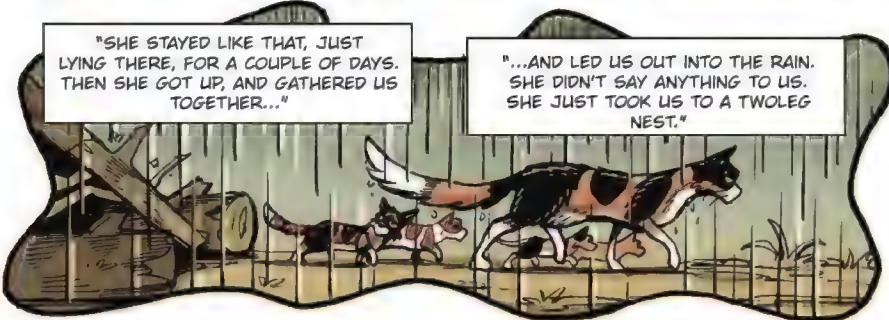






























SOL GAVE ME A LOT OF  
INFORMATION TO TAKE IN.

I'VE BEEN THINKING  
ABOUT IT A GREAT DEAL.



AND I NEED  
SOME PERSPECTIVE.



SO...WHAT  
ARE YOUR THOUGHTS  
ON SOL THESE  
DAYS?



WELL...I WAS  
PRETTY HORRIFIED  
ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED  
DURING THE FOX  
ATTACK.

SOL DOESN'T  
SEEM TO HAVE MUCH  
IN THE WAY OF  
COURAGE. OR FIGHTING  
TACTICS.

PLUS, JUST BEING HONEST,  
HE'S LAZY. AND A BIT TOO  
CLEVER. HE ALWAYS THINKS OF  
REASONS NOT TO DO SOMETHING.



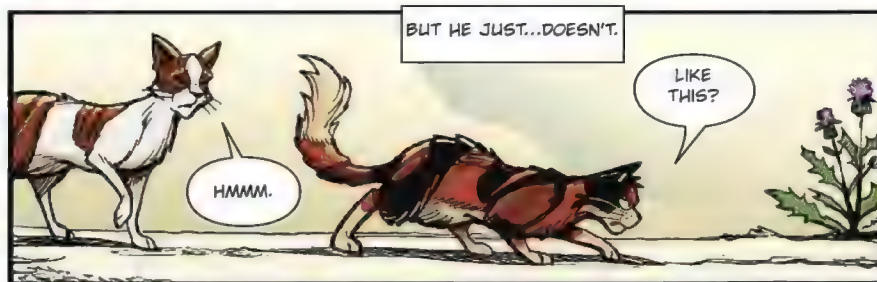
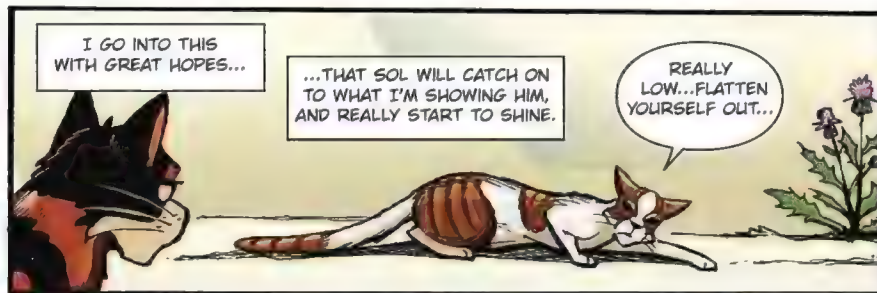


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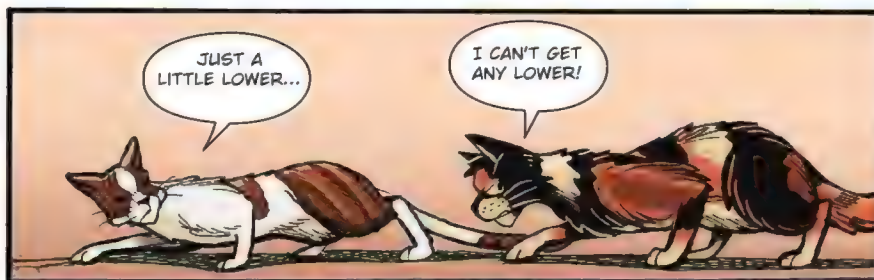
























A LOT HAS HAPPENED  
SINCE OUR LAST ONE.



BUT I'M HOPING TO KEEP  
THINGS FOCUSED ON MOVING  
FORWARD TONIGHT...

...RATHER THAN  
LOOKING BACK.



THAT SHOULDN'T  
BE TOO HARD.



THE WIND IS SUDDENLY  
MUCH COLDER, AND WE ALL  
KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS.

≡ SNFF SNFF ≡  
RAIN'S ON THE  
WAY.

GOOD.

WE COULD  
SURE USE  
SOME!







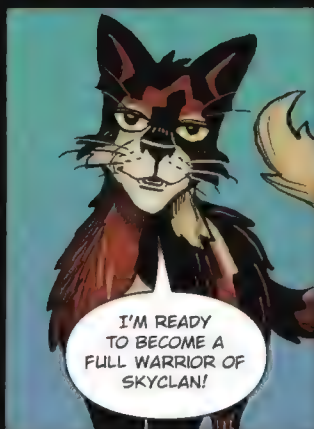






PLUS YOU'VE  
GOT A NEW WARRIOR  
AMONG YOU NOW!

ISN'T  
THAT RIGHT,  
LEAFSTAR?



I'M READY  
TO BECOME A  
FULL WARRIOR OF  
SKYCLAN!



SOL...THIS IS  
NEITHER THE TIME  
NOR THE PLACE FOR  
THIS, BUT...

I'M AFRAID  
THAT'S JUST NOT  
HOW IT WORKS.

WHEN YOU  
COMPLETE YOUR TRAINING,  
YOU'LL BE ASSESSED...

AND THEN  
GIVEN A WARRIOR  
NAME.



BUT...BUT  
YOU SAID I WAS  
LEARNING!

TODAY, IT  
WAS JUST TODAY,  
YOU TOLD ME  
THAT!

SOL...

HOW COULD  
YOU DO THIS TO ME?  
HOW COULD YOU HUMILIATE  
ME IN FRONT OF ALL MY  
CLANMATES?











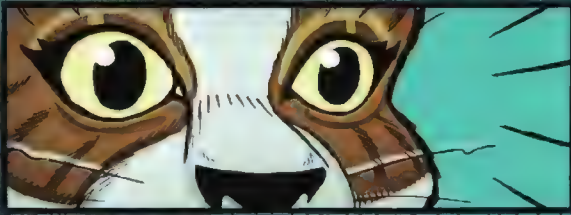












WHAT IS  
IT, MAMA?



STARCLAN HELP  
US...

















HOLD  
ON!

EVERYONE  
GRAB ON TO THE  
ROCKS!



IT TAKES A LONG TIME.  
I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG.  
I KNOW IT FEELS LIKE...  
A SEASON OR TWO...

MEEEEEP!  
MEEEEEEEEP!



...BUT FINALLY, FINALLY  
THE FLOODWATERS DIE DOWN,  
AND THE RAIN STOPS.



...IS IT  
OVER?



I THINK WE  
MIGHT NEED SOME  
HELP GETTING DOWN  
FROM HERE.







CATS, DAZED AND BEDRAGGLED,  
MAKE THEIR WAY BACK INTO  
WHAT'S LEFT OF OUR CAMP.



I DON'T EVEN RECOGNIZE  
THE FOREST BELOW  
THE GORGE NOW.

SO MANY TREES  
ARE JUST...GONE.



CAN YOU--  
WOULD YOU MIND  
LOOKING AFTER THE  
KITS FOR A BIT?

I NEED TO  
FIND OUT HOW BAD  
THINGS ARE.

OF  
COURSE.

WE'LL BE  
RIGHT HERE.



SKYCLAN!

I NEED ALL CATS  
ACCOUNTED FOR!  
IS ANYONE HURT?





























# WARRIORS

AFTER THE  
FLOOD





THIS IS  
SKYCLAN.

WHAT'S LEFT  
OF IT, ANYWAY.











...OPEN TO ATTACKS  
FROM RATS...FOXES...  
ROGUE CATS...



...EVEN  
TWOLEGS.



NOT THAT OUTSIDE  
THREATS ARE OUR  
ONLY TROUBLES.

JUST AS DANGEROUS TO  
THE CLAN IS A LACK OF  
CLEAN WATER TO DRINK.



A LOT OF CARE MUST  
BE TAKEN AS WE  
REBUILD OUR CAMP.

IT REQUIRES A LOT  
OF THOUGHT...

...BUT EVEN MORE THAN  
THOUGHT RIGHT NOW, IT NEEDS  
A LOT OF  
HARD WORK AND MUSCLE.

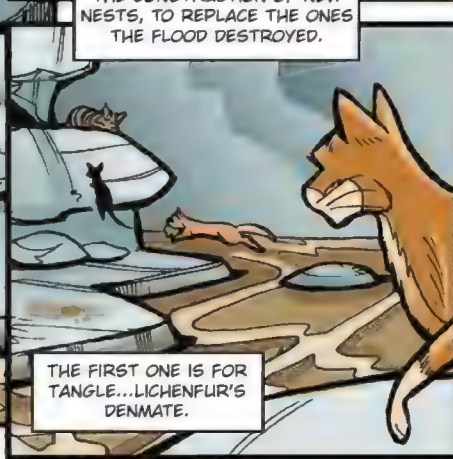




THE APPRENTICES WORK AS HARD AS THE WARRIORS...



WE NEED ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET.



CLOVERTAIL SUPERVISES THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW NESTS, TO REPLACE THE ONES THE FLOOD DESTROYED.

THE FIRST ONE IS FOR TANGLE...LICHENFUR'S DENMATE.

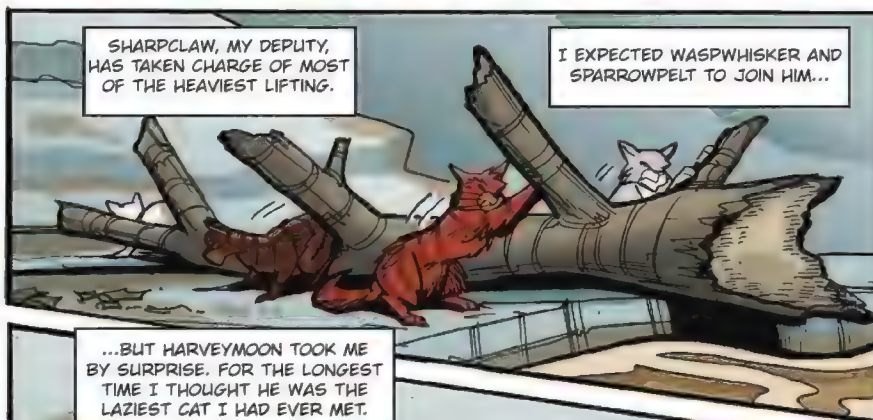


ORDINARILY TANGLE WOULD GRUMBLE AND SNAP AND TELL US ALL THAT HE COULD BUILD HIS OWN NEST...

...BUT TODAY HE JUST SITS AND WATCHES.







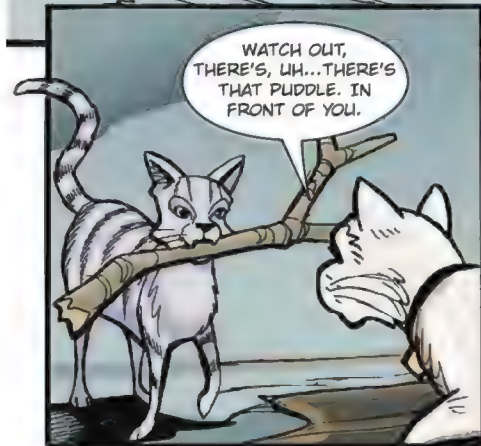






BUT LATELY HE'S BEEN SURPRISING ME IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

OH--  
HEY, MINTFUR...



WATCH OUT,  
THERE'S, UH...THERE'S  
THAT PUDDLE. IN  
FRONT OF YOU.



THANK YOU,  
HARVEYMOON, BUT  
I HAVE MADE MY WAY  
AROUND A PUDDLE  
BEFORE.

WELL, IT'S  
JUST--IT'S DEEPER  
THAN IT LOOKS.  
THAT'S ALL.



MY NAME IS LEAFSTAR.  
I AM SKYCLAN'S LEADER...

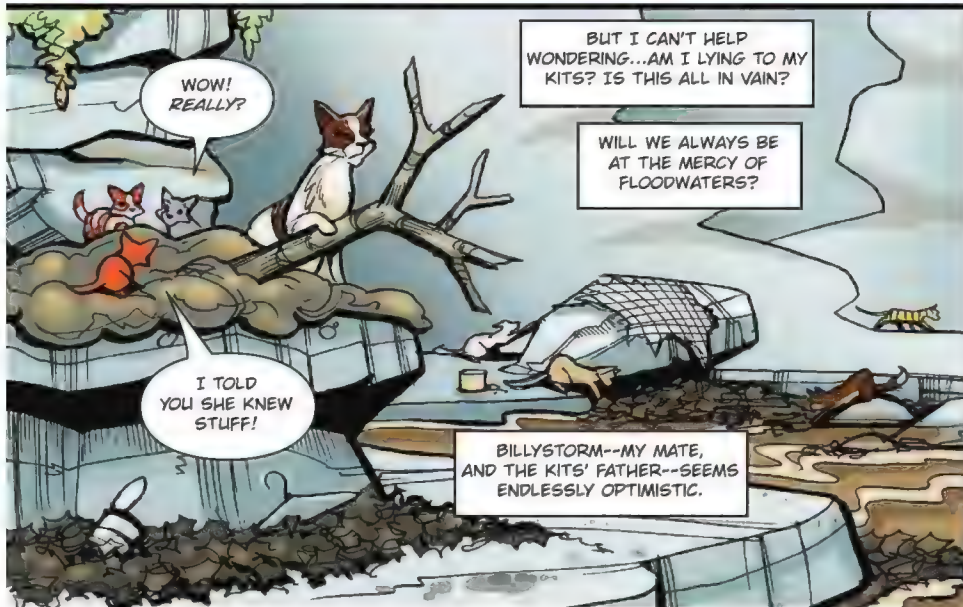
...AND EVERY CAT HERE  
IS MY RESPONSIBILITY.





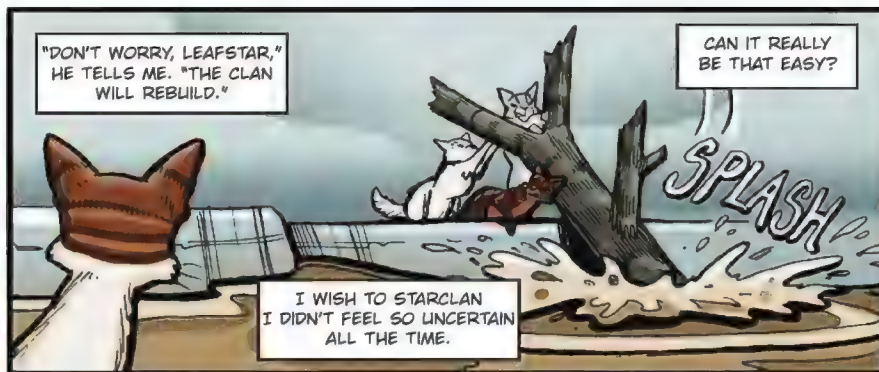














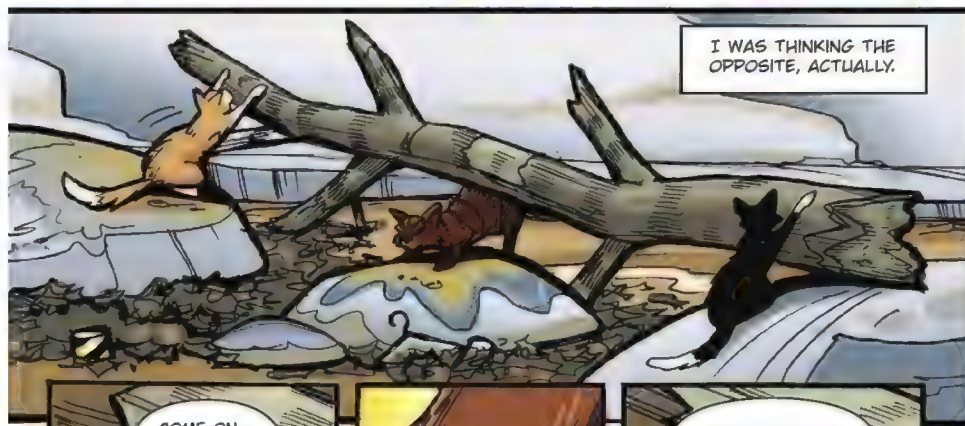




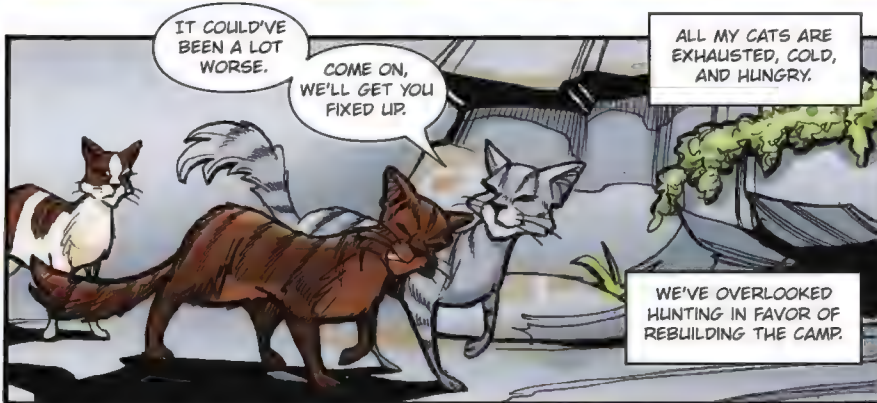










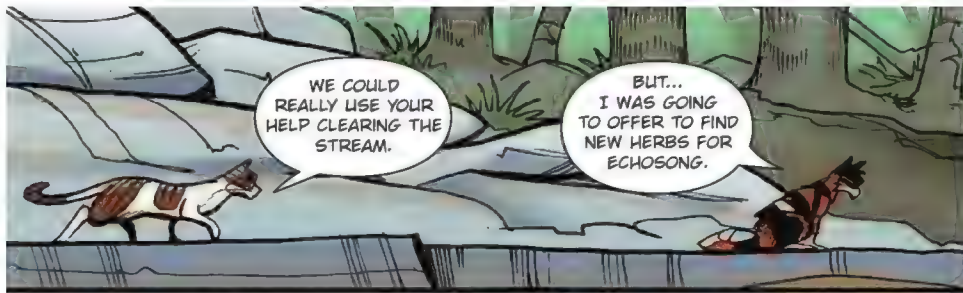




















SPOTTEDLEAF!

I WAS BEGINNING  
TO WONDER IF YOU'D  
EVER SLEEP LONG  
ENOUGH TO DREAM  
AGAIN.

SPOTTEDLEAF--  
I HAVE TO ASK  
YOU--

ARE WE  
NOT SAFE HERE  
ANYMORE?

DID STARCLAN  
SEND THE FLOOD  
FOR A REASON?

NO, NO, THE  
FLOOD WASN'T A  
PUNISHMENT. NOTHING  
LIKE THAT. BUT...











BUT...  
WAIT!

CATS CAN  
CHOOSE TO BE  
WARRIORS, CAN'T  
THEY?

...CAN'T  
THEY?

LAST NIGHT'S DREAM-VISIT  
DIDN'T HELP AS MUCH  
AS I WOULD'VE LIKED.



BUT AT LEAST TODAY  
I HAVE THE COMFORT OF  
BILLYSTORM RETURNING  
TO CAMP.

HE STAYED AWAY  
YESTERDAY BECAUSE  
I TOLD HIM TO CATCH  
UP ON SLEEP.

HE GOT PRETTY  
BATTERED DURING  
THE FLOOD.

















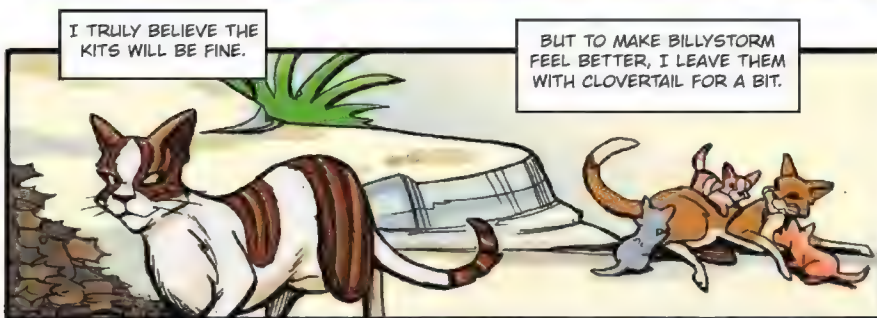






THE KITS  
WILL BE  
FINE.

THEY'LL  
JUST HAVE TO BE  
CAREFUL ABOUT  
WHERE THEY PUT  
THEIR PAWS.



I TRULY BELIEVE THE  
KITS WILL BE FINE.

BUT TO MAKE BILLYSTORM  
FEEL BETTER, I LEAVE THEM  
WITH CLOVERTAIL FOR A BIT.



SOL. YOU  
MENTIONED LOOKING  
FOR HERBS  
EARLIER.

WOULD YOU  
LIKE ME TO SHOW  
YOU HOW TO FIND  
SOME?

THAT'D  
BE GREAT!



IT'S GOOD TO GET AWAY  
FROM THE CAMP, EVEN  
FOR A SHORT TIME.

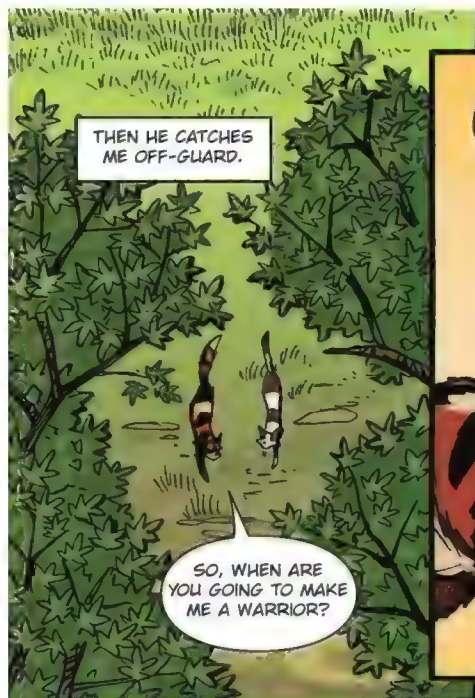
AND SOL LISTENS WELL, AS I  
TEACH HIM SOME BASICS--HOW  
TO FIND MARIGOLD LEAVES,  
YARROW, AND COMFREY.





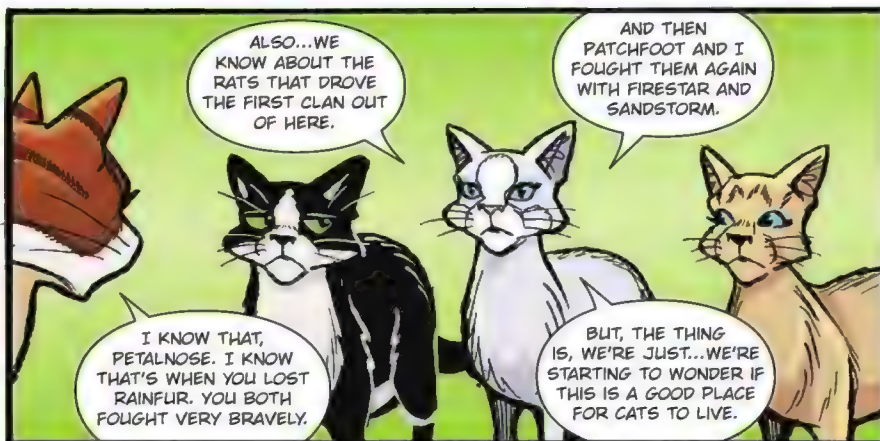






















YOU DIDN'T WARN  
ME ABOUT THAT,  
SPOTTEDLEAF!



I'M  
BACK.

WHERE'S  
BILLYSTORM?

HI,  
MAMA!

HE WENT  
ON A HUNTING  
PATROL!

THAT'S  
A NICE BIT  
OF MOSS.

ARE YOU  
STALKING IT LIKE  
A MOUSE?



OH, NO.  
IT'S OUR SPECIAL  
NEST!

WE'RE  
PRETENDING OUR  
HOUSEFOLK GAVE  
IT TO US!



YOUR...  
WHAT...?



BILLYSTORM SAYS  
WE CAN GO LIVE WITH  
HIM NOW! TO KEEP  
US SAFE IF THERE'S  
ANOTHER FLOOD.

YEAH! HE SAYS  
THE HOUSEFOLKS'  
DEN NEVER  
FLOODS!

NEVER  
EVER!













































"LET'S SEE YOU  
CATCH A SQUIRREL."



I HAVE TO GIVE SOL  
SOME CREDIT. HE CATCHES  
ONE ON HIS SECOND TRY.

HIS CLIMBING ISN'T GREAT,  
AND HIS EXECUTION'S A LITTLE  
MESSY, BUT HE'S FAST AND  
STRONG AND DETERMINED.



SO FAR  
SO GOOD, SOL.

NOW, I WANT  
YOU TO CHECK  
SKYCLAN'S BORDERS,  
AND REFRESH AT LEAST  
THREE MARKS.

THANK  
YOU!

CONSIDER  
IT DONE!



NOW WE RUN INTO TROUBLE.  
HE'S GETTING DISTRACTED.













A MEAN  
OLD TWOLEG USED  
TO LIVE HERE.

HE TERRORIZED  
SHREWTOOTH, AND  
PETALNOSE TOO, A LONG  
TIME AGO.

BUT WE SET HIM STRAIGHT  
ONE NIGHT. ATTACKED  
HIM AND HIS DOG.



I'M NOT PROUD  
OF RESORTING TO VIOLENCE  
LIKE THAT, BUT HE HAD  
TO LEARN A LESSON.

NOW WE  
DON'T GO NEAR THE  
NEST, THOUGH.

WHY? IS HE  
STILL THERE?

NO, HE'S GONE.  
IT'S JUST THAT THERE  
ARE BAD ECHOES THERE.  
UNHAPPY CATS. TWOLEG  
FURY. IT'S A BAD  
PLACE.

COME ON,  
LET'S HEAD  
BACK.





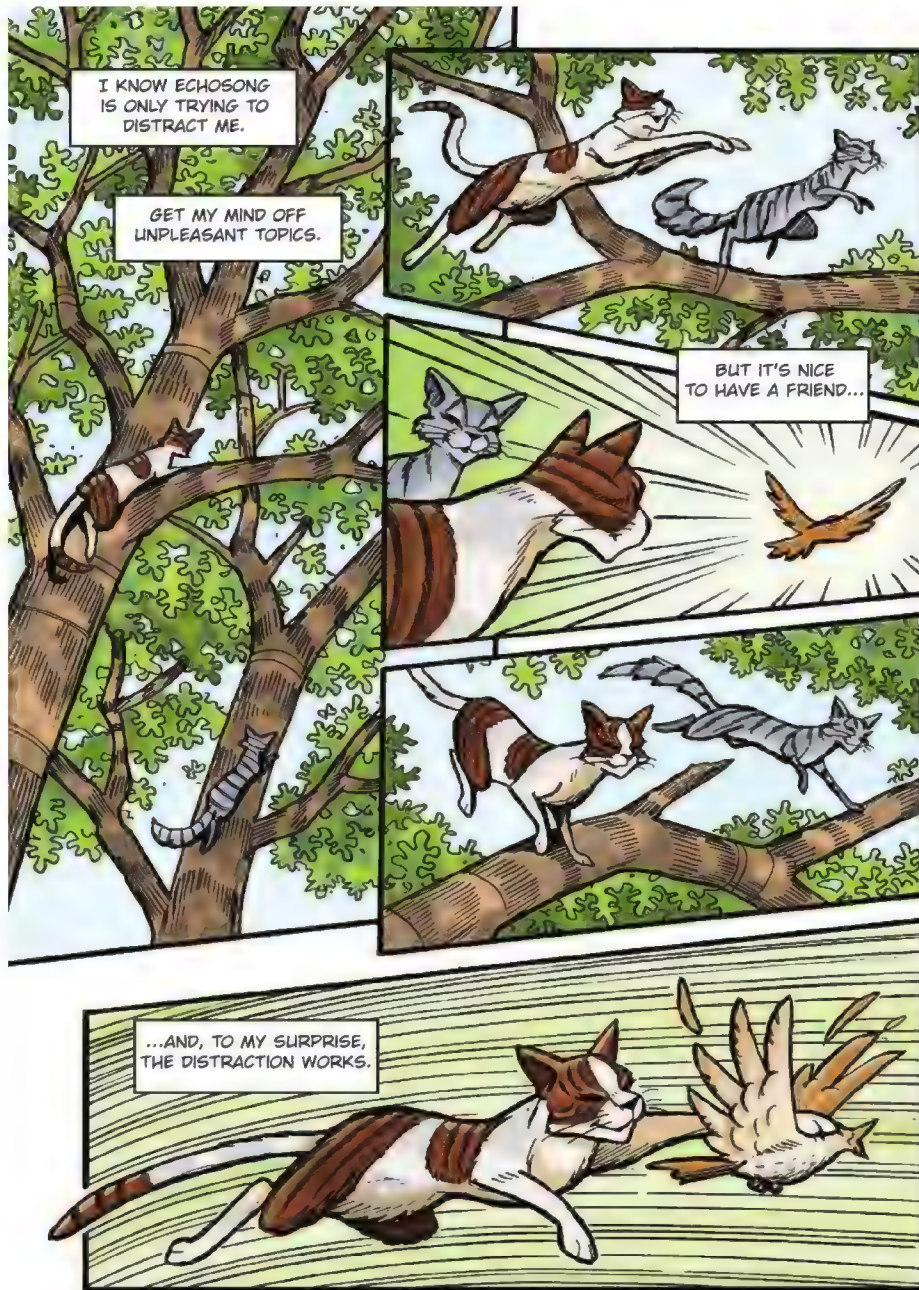












I KNOW ECHOSONG  
IS ONLY TRYING TO  
DISTRACT ME.

GET MY MIND OFF  
UNPLEASANT TOPICS.

BUT IT'S NICE  
TO HAVE A FRIEND...

...AND, TO MY SURPRISE,  
THE DISTRACTION WORKS.





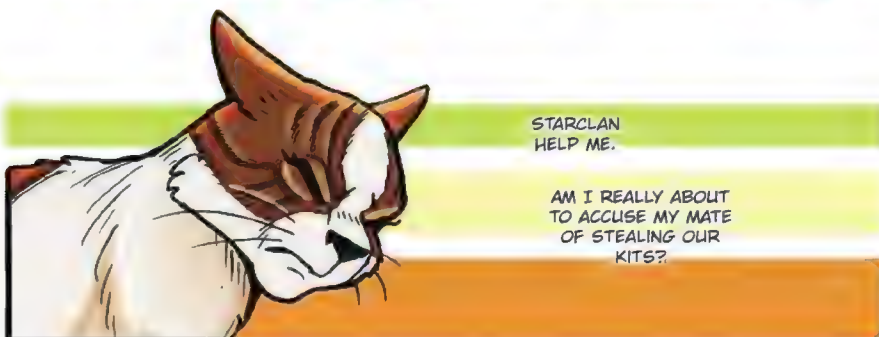
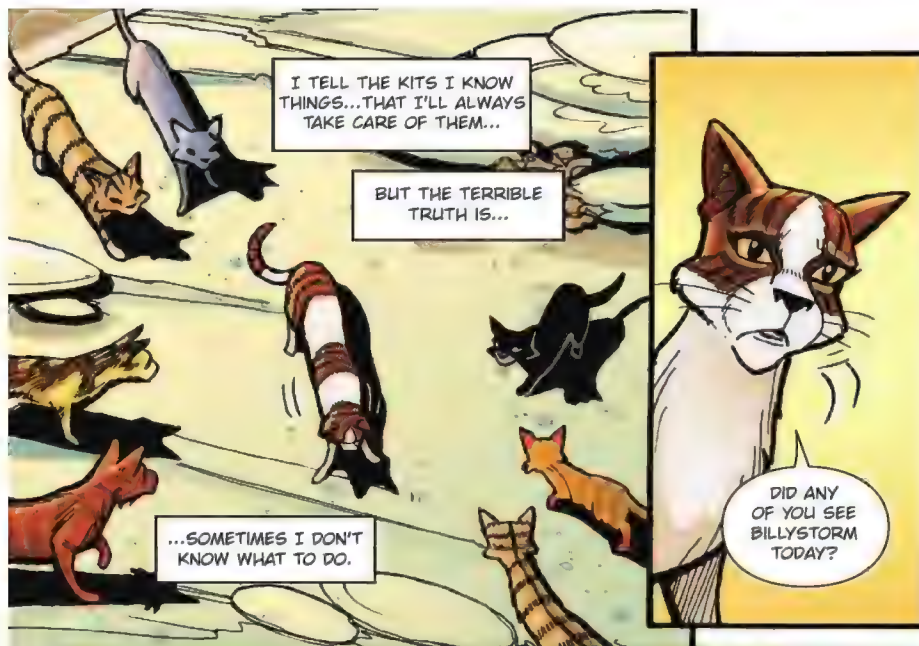














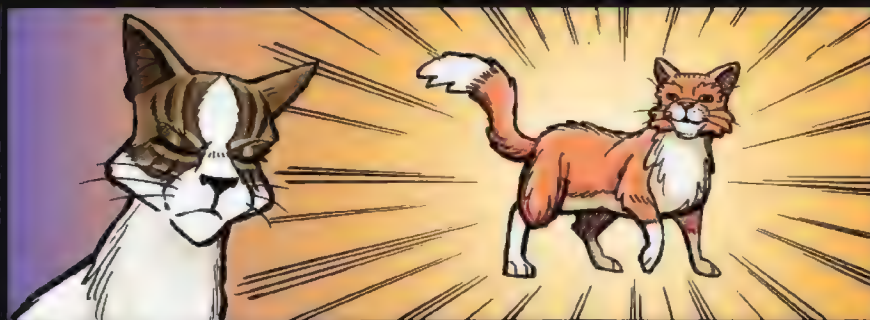








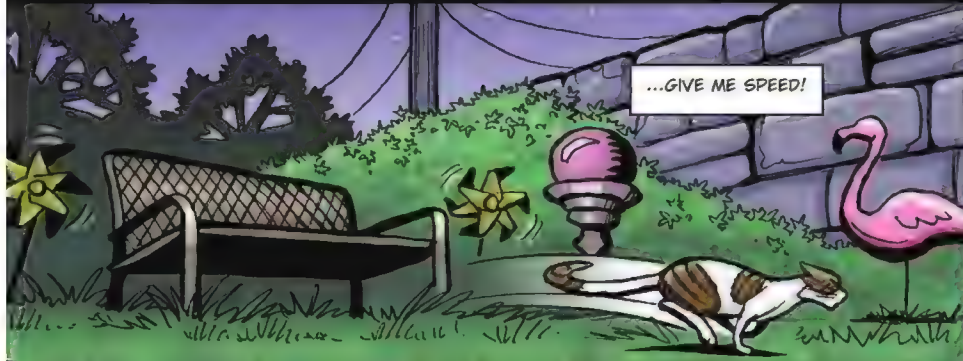










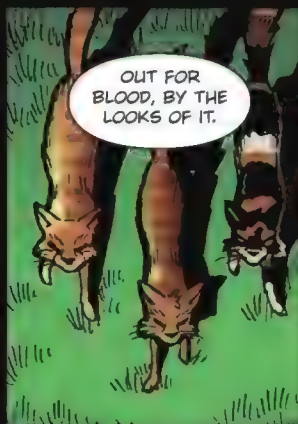












OUT FOR BLOOD, BY THE LOOKS OF IT.



SHARPCLAW!

YOU'RE WRONG! BILLYSTORM DOESN'T HAVE THE KITS!



WHAT? HOW DO YOU KNOW?

BECAUSE HE'S WITH ME.



DOESN'T HAVE THE-- THE KITS ARE MISSING?

SINCE THIS AFTERNOON.

THEN WHY AREN'T YOU OUT LOOKING FOR THEM? WHY WASTE TIME COMING HERE?

I WAS TRYING TO PROTECT YOU, YOU HALFKIT! SOME OF US THOUGHT YOU MIGHT'VE TAKEN THEM!



I CAN LOOK AFTER MYSELF, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO MOUSE-BRAINED PATROLS JUMPING TO DUMB CONCLUSIONS.

OH, I GUESS I SHOULD'VE JUST LET NINE WARRIORS COME AND TEAR YOU APART, THEN?

AS IF THEY COULD.



SHARPCLAW. YOU WANT TO LOOK FOR THE KITS IN MY HOUSEFOLKS' PLACE? GO RIGHT AHEAD.

BE MY GUEST.





I...DON'T  
SUPPOSE THAT'LL  
BE NECESSARY...  
AT THIS POINT...



LOOK, I  
SHOULD'VE...I MEAN,  
I SHOULDN'T'VE...

SAVE IT.



"RIGHT NOW THE ONLY  
THING I CARE ABOUT  
IS FINDING OUR KITS."



I JUST WANT  
YOU TO KNOW, LEAFSTAR,  
I WON'T REST UNTIL  
THE KITS ARE BROUGHT  
BACK HOME.

THEY'RE THE  
FUTURE OF THE  
CLAN. THEY'RE  
WARRIORS!



THANK  
YOU, SOL.

I APPRECIATE SOL'S WORDS,  
BUT THEY DON'T MAKE ME  
FEEL ANY BETTER.

NEITHER DOES HOW  
THOROUGHLY BILLYSTORM  
IS IGNORING ME.









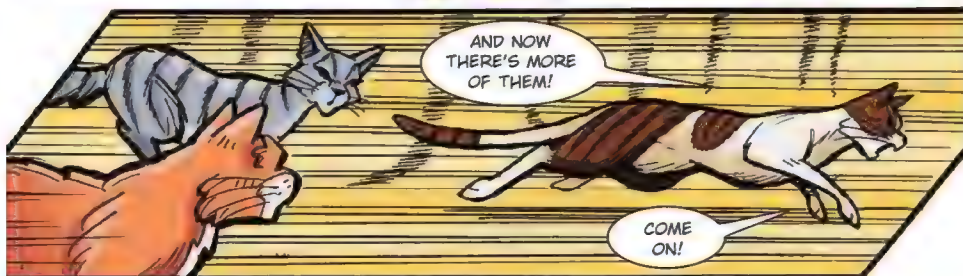
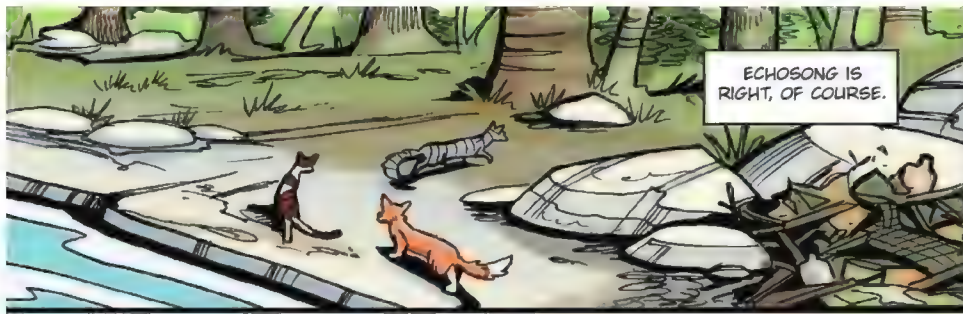
















STARCLAN  
HELP US...

ROGUES. TOUGH  
AND MEAN FROM THE  
LOOKS OF THEM.

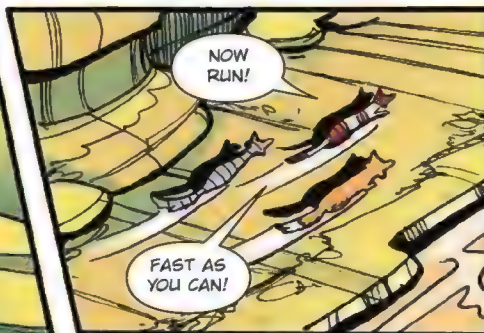
DANGEROUS.

AND HEADING  
STRAIGHT FOR SKYCLAN.















INTRUDERS!



WE'RE  
UNDER ATTACK!



FORM UP  
ALONGSIDE  
ME!

GET THE  
YOUNGEST AND  
OLDEST INTO  
ECHOSONG'S  
DEN!



LEAFSTAR,  
WHAT ARE  
WE FACING?  
FOXES?

AT LEAST  
EIGHT ROGUE  
CATS!

ARRIVING  
ANY MOMENT  
NOW!



GET  
READY!





MAYBE PETALNOSE WAS  
RIGHT. MAYBE THIS ISN'T THE  
BEST PLACE TO RAISE KITS.

BUT AT THIS  
MOMENT...WE'RE  
UNITED.



AT THIS MOMENT, WE  
CAN FACE ANYTHING.



GIVE UP NOW,  
WEAKLINGS!

SAVE  
YOURSELVES!

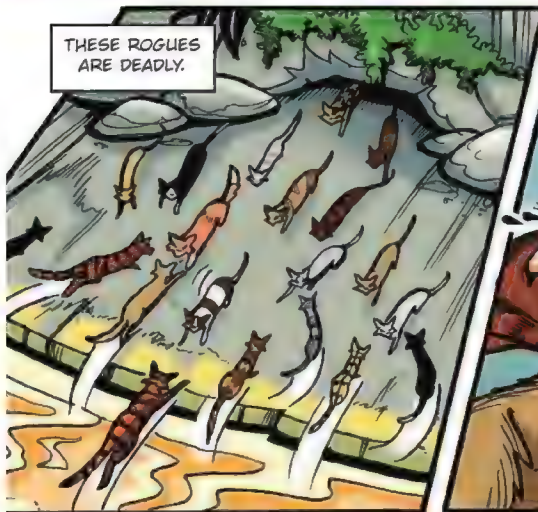




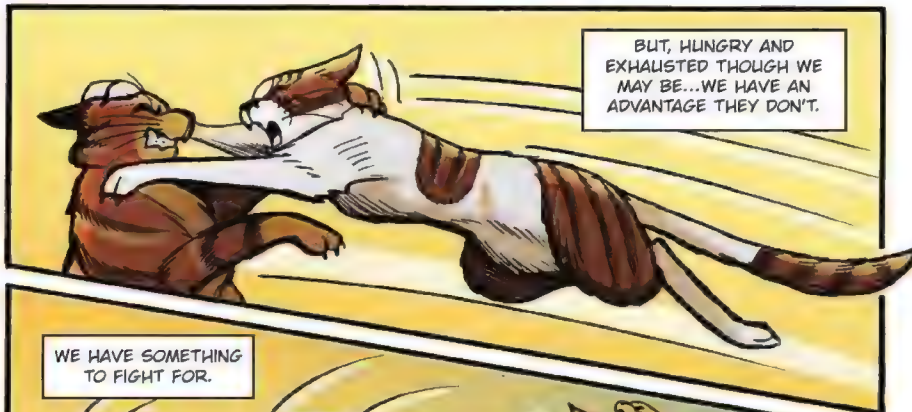
























WHAT'S  
THE MATTER?

TOO SCARED  
TO TRY TO FINISH  
US OFF?



YOU'VE SEEN  
WHAT SKYCLAN WILL  
DO TO DEFEND OUR  
HOME. THIS IS OUR  
TERRITORY.

STAY OUT OF  
IT. OR WE'LL  
THRASH YOU  
AGAIN.

BUT OUR  
WARRIOR CODE  
IS CLEAR: VICTORY  
DOES NOT REQUIRE  
DEATH.



"WARRIOR  
CODE?"

WHAT  
NONSENSE  
IS THAT?



IT'S THE KIND  
OF "NONSENSE" THAT  
WE ALL LIVE BY.  
WITH PRIDE AND  
HONOR.

WITHOUT IT,  
WE'D BE PITIFUL  
AND LOST, JUST  
LIKE YOU.

THE CODE GIVES  
US STRENGTH, AND  
THE CERTAINTY THAT  
STARCLAN WATCHES  
OVER US.







IT SHOULD BE A JOYOUS  
MOMENT...BUT I FEEL MY HEART  
BREAK ALL OVER AGAIN.

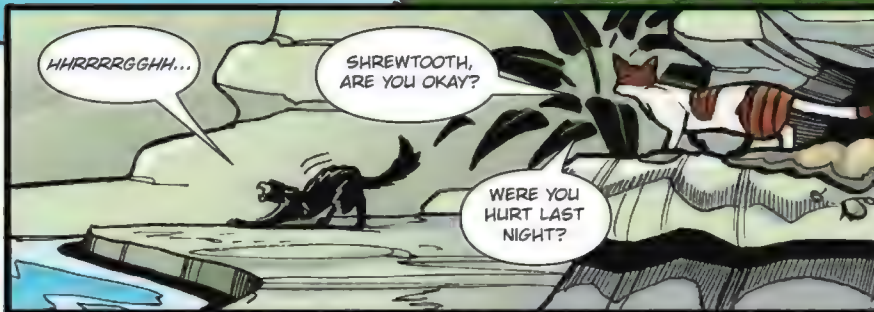
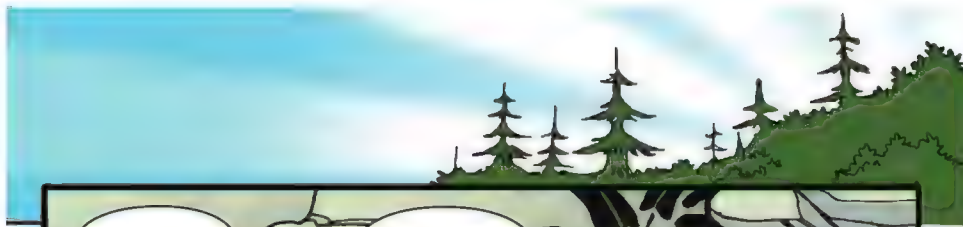
IT'S MY KITS'  
HOME, TOO.



WHERE  
ARE THEY?















I'LL HAVE TO ASK HIM  
WHERE THEY ARE AT  
SOME POINT, SO I CAN  
AVOID THEM MYSELF.



GOING  
OUT AGAIN?

THE LAST PARTY  
JUST RETURNED...  
WHAT ELSE AM I  
GOING TO DO?

YOU FOUGHT  
A HARD BATTLE  
YESTERDAY, AND I BET  
YOU HAVEN'T SLEPT  
FOR DAYS.

WHEREVER  
OUR KITS ARE...



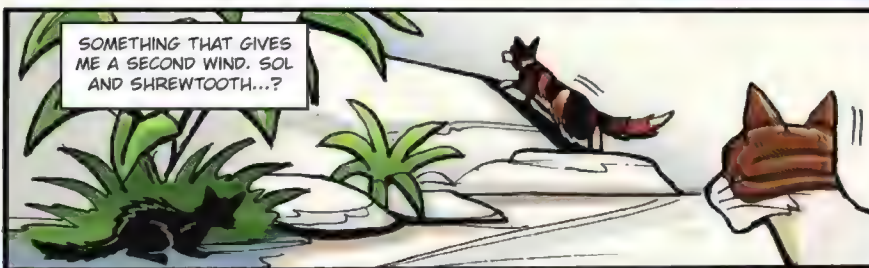
...THEY HAVE  
ENOUGH SENSE  
TO SEEK SHELTER IN  
THE NIGHT.

WE'LL FIND THEM  
MORE EASILY IN  
DAYLIGHT. I'LL WAKE  
YOU AT DAWN.



I DON'T HAVE THE  
ENERGY  
TO ARGUE WITH HIM...

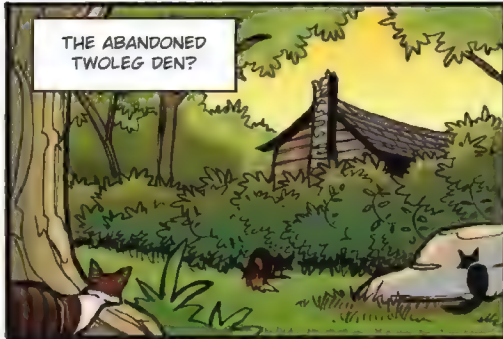
...BUT THEN I SEE  
SOMETHING ODD.



SOMETHING THAT GIVES  
ME A SECOND WIND. SOL  
AND SHREWTOOTH...?



















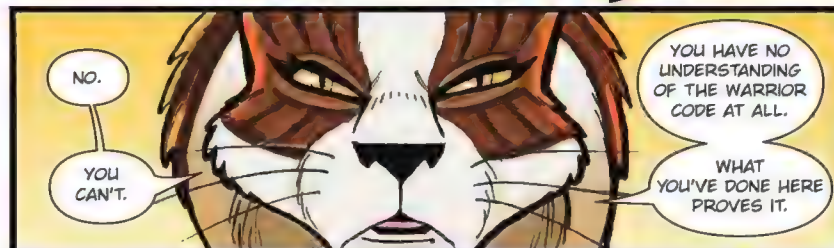


















BUT YOU  
DIDN'T JUST  
BETRAY ME.

YOU BETRAYED  
THE ENTIRE  
CLAN.



...AND YOU NEVER  
EVEN CONSIDERED HOW  
IT WOULD MAKE ANY  
OF US FEEL.

THE CLAN  
IS A FAMILY, SOL.  
A COMMUNITY.



AND YOU'RE  
INCAPABLE OF THINKING  
ABOUT ANYONE BUT  
YOURSELF.









I...I...

I'LL TELL YOU.  
YOU'RE LEAVING,  
SOL. YOU'RE GOING  
FAR AWAY.

AND YOU'RE  
NOT EVER COMING  
BACK.



YOU. YOU  
HAVE NO RIGHT TO  
SPEAK HERE.

YOU MAKE  
ME SICK.

PATHETIC  
"DAYLIGHT WARRIOR,"  
ALWAYS TROTting BACK  
TO YOUR TWOLEGS WHEN  
IT GETS DARK AND  
COLD.



NOT  
ANYMORE.

MY PLACE IS IN  
THE GORGE FROM NOW  
ON. MY FAMILY NEEDS ME,  
AND THIS IS WHERE  
I BELONG.

THE CLAN  
UNITED AGAINST  
THOSE ROGUES.

WE PROVED  
THAT NO CAT IS GOING  
TO LEAVE THE GORGE,  
NOT UNTIL STARCLAN  
CALLS THEM.



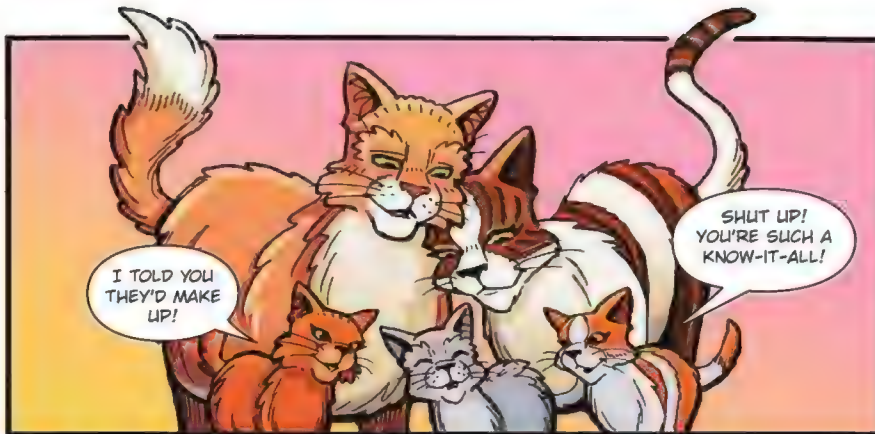
IF THE FUTURE  
OF SKYCLAN IS HERE,  
THEN SO IS MINE.

BILLYSTORM...  
ARE YOU SURE?

NEVER  
MORE SO.











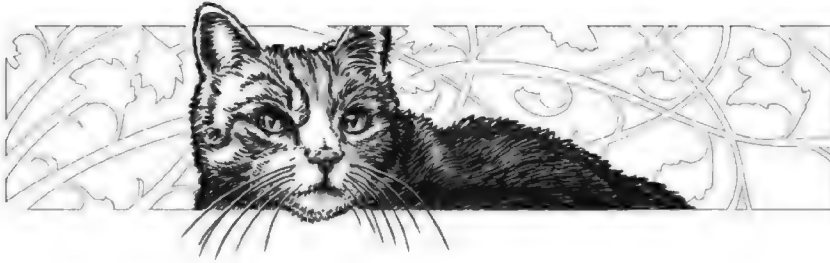


A NEW **WARRIORS** ADVENTURE BEGINS!  
DON'T MISS









## CHAPTER 1



*Shadowpaw craned his neck over his back, straining to groom the hard-to-reach spot at the base of his tail. He had just managed to give his fur a few vigorous licks when he heard paw steps approaching. He looked up to see his father, Tigerstar, and his mother, Dovewing, their pelts brushing as they gazed down at him with pride and joy shining in their eyes.*

"What is it?" he asked, sitting up and giving his pelt a shake.

"We just came to see you off," Tigerstar responded, while Dovewing gave her son's ears a quick, affectionate lick.

Shadowpaw's fur prickled with embarrassment. *Like I haven't been to the Moonpool before, he thought. They're still treating me as if I'm a kit in the nursery!*

He was sure that his parents hadn't made such a fuss when his littermates, Pouncestep and Lightleap, had been



warrior apprentices. *I guess it's because I'm going to be a medicine cat. . . . Or maybe because of the seizures he'd had since he was a kit. He knew his parents still worried about him, even though it had been a while since his last upsetting vision. They're probably hoping that with some training from the other medicine cats, I'll learn to control my visions once and for all . . . and I can be normal.*

Shadowpaw wanted that, too.

"The snow must be really deep up on the moors," Dove-wing mewed. "Make sure you watch where you're putting your paws."

Shadowpaw wriggled his shoulders, praying that none of his Clanmates were listening. "I will," he promised, glancing toward the medicine cats' den in the hope of seeing his mentor, Puddleshine, emerge. But there was no sign of him yet.

To his relief, Tigerstar gave Dovewing a nudge and they both moved off toward the Clan leader's den. Shadowpaw rubbed one paw hastily across his face and bounded across the camp to see what was keeping Puddleshine.

Intent on finding his mentor, Shadowpaw barely noticed the patrol trekking toward the fresh-kill pile, prey dangling from their jaws. He skidded to a halt just in time to avoid colliding with Cloverfoot, the Clan deputy.

"Shadowpaw!" she exclaimed around the shrew she was carrying. "You nearly knocked me off my paws."

"Sorry, Cloverfoot," Shadowpaw meowed, dipping his head respectfully.



Cloverfoot let out a snort, half annoyed, half amused. “Apprentices!”

Shadowpaw tried to hide his irritation. He was an apprentice, yes, but an old one—medicine cat apprentices’ training lasted longer than warriors’. His littermates were full warriors already. But he knew his parents would want him to respect the deputy.

Cloverfoot padded on, followed by Strikestone, Yarrowleaf, and Blazefire. Though they were all carrying prey, they had only one or two pieces each, and what little they had managed to catch was undersized and scrawny.

“I can’t remember a leaf-bare as cold as this,” Yarrowleaf complained as she dropped a blackbird on the fresh-kill pile.

Strikestone nodded, shivering as he fluffed out his brown tabby pelt. “No wonder there’s no prey. They’re all hiding down their holes, and I can’t blame them.”

As Shadowpaw moved on, out of earshot, he couldn’t help noticing how pitifully small the fresh-kill pile was, and he tried to ignore his own growling belly. He could hardly remember his first leaf-bare, when he’d been a tiny kit, so he didn’t know if the older cats were right and the weather was unusually cold.

*I only know I don’t like it,* he grumbled to himself as he picked his way through the icy slush that covered the ground of the camp. *My paws are so cold I think they’ll drop off. I can’t wait for newleaf!*

Puddleshine ducked out of the entrance to the medicine





cats' den as Shadowpaw approached. "Good, you're ready," he meowed. "We'd better hurry, or we'll be late." As he led the way toward the camp entrance, he added, "I've been checking our herb stores, and they're getting dangerously low."

"We could search for more on the way back," Shadowpaw suggested, his medicine-cat duties driving out his thoughts of cold and hunger. He always enjoyed working with Puddleshine to find, sort, and store the herbs. Treating cats with herbs made him feel calm and in control . . . the opposite of how he felt during his seizures and upsetting visions.

"We can try," Puddleshine sighed. "But what isn't frost-bitten will be covered with snow." He glanced over his shoulder at Shadowpaw as the two cats headed out into the forest. "This is turning out to be a really bad leaf-bare. And it isn't over yet, not by a long way."

Excitement tingled through Shadowpaw from ears to tail-tip as he scrambled up the rocky slope toward the line of bushes that surrounded the Moonpool hollow. His worries over his seizures and the bitter leaf-bare faded; every hair on his pelt was bristling with anticipation of his meeting with the other medicine cats, and most of all with StarClan.

He might not be a full medicine cat yet, and he might not be fully in control of his visions . . . but he would still get to meet with his warrior ancestors. And from the rest



of the medicine cats he would find out what was going on in the other Clans.

Standing at the top of the slope, waiting for Puddleshine to push his way through the bushes, Shadowpaw reflected on the last few moons. Things had been tense in ShadowClan as every cat settled into their new boundaries and grew used to sharing a border with SkyClan. Not long ago, SkyClan had lived separately from the other Clans, in a far-flung territory in a gorge. But StarClan had called SkyClan back to join the other Clans by the lake, because the Clans were stronger when all five were united. Still, SkyClan had needed its own territory, which had meant new borders for everyone, and it had taken time for the other Clans to accept them. Shadowpaw was relieved that things seemed more peaceful now; the brutally cold leaf-bare had given all the Clans more to worry about than quarreling with one another. They were even beginning to rely on one another, especially in sharing herbs when the cold weather had damaged so many of the plants they needed. Shadowpaw felt proud that they were all getting along, instead of battling one another for every piece of prey.

*That wasn't a great start to Tigerstar's leadership. . . . I'm glad it's over now!*

"Are you going to stand out there all night?"

At the sound of Puddleshine's voice from the other side of the bushes, Shadowpaw dived in among the branches, wincing as sharp twigs scraped along his pelt, and thrust



himself out onto the ledge above the Moonpool. Opposite him, halfway up the rocky wall of the hollow, a trickle of water bubbled out from between two moss-covered boulders. The water fell down into the pool below, with a fitful glimmer as if the stars themselves were trapped inside it. The rippling surface of the pool shone silver with reflected moonlight.

Shadowpaw wanted to leap into the air with excitement at being back at the Moonpool, but he fought to hold on to some self-control, and padded down the spiral path to the water's edge with all the dignity expected of a medicine cat. Awe welled up inside him as he felt his paws slip into the hollows made by cats countless seasons before.

*Who were they? Where did they go?* he wondered.

The two ThunderClan medicine cats were already sitting beside the pool. Shadowpaw guessed it was too cold to wait outside for everyone to arrive, as the medicine cats usually did. Alderheart was thoughtfully grooming his chest fur, while Jayfeather's tail-tip twitched back and forth in irritation. He turned his blind blue gaze on Puddleshine and Shadowpaw as they reached the bottom of the hollow.

"You took your time," he snapped. "We're wasting moonlight."

Shadowpaw realized that Kestrelflight of WindClan and Mothwing and Willowshine, the two RiverClan medicine cats, were sitting just beyond the two from ThunderClan. The shadow of a rock had hidden them





from him until now.

"Nice to see you, too, Jayfeather," Puddleshine responded mildly. "I'm sorry if we're late, but I don't see Frecklewish or Fidgetflake, either."

Jayfeather gave a disdainful sniff. "If they're not here soon, we'll start without them."

*Would Jayfeather really do that?* Shadowpaw was still staring at the ThunderClan medicine cat, wondering, when a rustling from the top of the slope put him on alert. Looking up, he saw Frecklewish pushing her way through the bushes, followed closely by Fidgetflake.

"At last!" Jayfeather hissed.

*He's in a mood*, Shadowpaw thought, then added to himself with a flicker of amusement, *Nothing new there, then.*

As the two SkyClan medicine cats padded down the slope, Shadowpaw noticed how thin and weary they both looked. For a heartbeat he wondered if there was anything wrong in SkyClan. Then he realized that he and the rest of the medicine cats looked just as skinny, just as worn out by the trials of leaf-bare.

Frecklewish dipped her head to her fellow medicine cats as she joined them beside the pool. "Greetings," she mewed, her fatigue clear in her voice. "How is the prey running in your Clans?"

For a moment no cat replied, and Shadowpaw could sense their uneasiness. *None of them wants to admit that their Clan is having problems.*

Shadowpaw was surprised when Puddleshine, who was



normally so pensive, was the first to speak up. Maybe the cold had banished his mentor's reserve and enabled him to be honest.

"The hunting is very poor in ShadowClan," he replied; Shadowpaw felt a twinge of alarm at how discouraged his mentor sounded. "If this freezing cold goes on much longer, I don't know what we'll do."

The remaining medicine cats exchanged glances of relief, as if they were glad to learn their Clan wasn't the only one suffering.

Willowshine nodded agreement. "Many RiverClan cats are getting sick because it's so cold."

"In ThunderClan too," Alderheart murmured.

"We're running out of herbs," Fidgetflake added with a twitch of his whiskers. "And the few we have left are shriveled and useless."

Frecklewish gave her Clanmate a sympathetic glance. "I've heard some of the younger warriors joking about running off to be kittypets," she meowed.

"No cat had better say that in my hearing," Jayfeather drew his lips back in the beginning of a snarl. "Or they'll wish they hadn't."

"Keep your fur on, Jayfeather," Frecklewish responded. "It was only a joke. All SkyClan cats are loyal to their Clan."

Jayfeather's only reply was an irritated flick of his ears.

"I don't suppose any of you have spare supplies of cat-mint?" Kestrelflight asked hesitantly. "The clumps that



grow in WindClan are all blackened by frost. We won't have any more until newleaf."

Most of the cats shook their heads, except for Willowshine, who rested her tail encouragingly on Kestrelflight's shoulder. "RiverClan can help," she promised. "There's catmint growing in the Twoleg gardens near our border. It's more sheltered there."

"Thanks, Willowshine." Kestrelflight's voice was unsteady. "There's whitecough in the WindClan camp, and without catmint I'm terrified it will turn to green-cough."

"Meet me by the border tomorrow at sunhigh," Willowshine mewed. "I'll show you where the catmint grows."

"This is all well and good," Jayfeather snorted, "every cat getting along, but let's not forget why we're here. I'm much more interested in what StarClan has to say. Shall we begin?" He paced to the edge of the Moonpool and stretched out one forepaw to touch the surface, only to draw his paw back with a gasp of surprise.





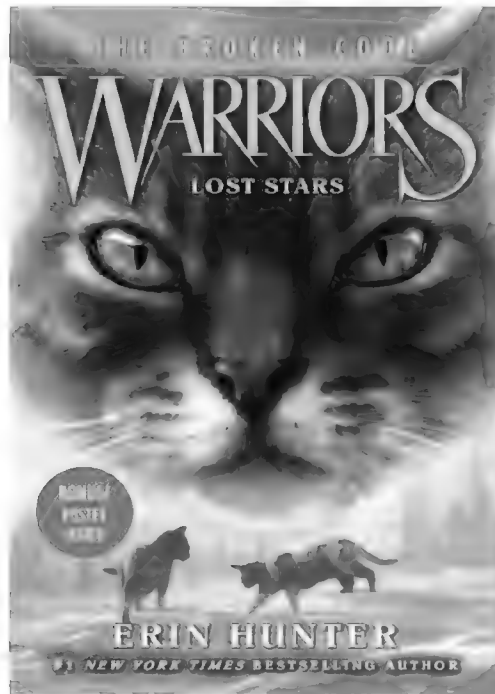
## **ERIN HUNTER**

is inspired by a love of cats and a fascination with the ferocity of the natural world. As well as having great respect for nature in all its forms, Erin enjoys creating rich mythical explanations for animal behavior. She is also the author of the Seekers, Survivors, and Bravelands series.

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